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CBM SALUTES

ALEX SCHOMBURG

The Golden Age Wizard

by Steve Duin

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No. 6 September, 1991

I sometimes imagine readers who are trying to learn more about old comic books but are unsure of how to go about it. And when many of these collectors say old comics they mean Golden Age DC hero books. And since these are the most prohibitively priced old comics, one can only applaud DC's 1990 anthology ***The Greatest Golden Age Stories Ever Told.*** This book provides a chance to absorb the flavor of the first heroic era from the company that did it best.

The Superman story from 1949 is a winner featuring the introduction of kryptonite into the strip. The Batman story from 1945 has a real proletarian feel; it celebrates those who work at night, especially the dynamic duo. The 1944 Flash yarn is not well drawn but moves nicely under Gardner Fox's smooth scripting. The Green Lantern tale puts Alex Toth to good use in a 1947 chiller, "The Icicle Goes South". This is classic DC hero versus villain stuff. These are DC's top four heroes (through both heroic ages) and it's a testament to this book's strength that all four are represented at their best.

The dates on some of these stories show that DC took the extended view of the golden age, which has it going all through the 1940's. I agree with this and think the Green Lantern and Superman stories ably demonstrate that the postwar hero material still packed a punch. While I concur that the era shouldn't end with the war's end, certain features like Boy Commandos lost momentum without the Axis adversaries. DC, perhaps for convenience, also included a wonderful story that technically predates the Golden Age, the first Slam Bradley appearance from *Detective* #1 March 1937. Well folks, this comes close to being the first original comic book story of any note, and though DC, in the introduction, apologizes for crudeness of content therein, I defy them to write thirteen pages to match these in fast moving engaging action. Siegel and Shuster showed the "write stuff", right from the start.

For some bizarre reason, DC chose to include several stories published by Quality Comics whose titles and characters they bought in 1956. While I do feel this blurs the DC focus, the Reed Crandall Blackhawk is a treasure. Blackhawk was one of the three Quality titles DC continued, all for long runs. (The other two were *G.I. Combat* and Heart Throbs.) However both Kid Eternity and the Black Condor contribute clunkers, despite brilliant art by Mack Raboy and Lou Fine. The final Quality offering, a 1950 Jack Cole Plastic Man extravaganza, is the second best story in the book. Cole is a master of sight gags, and the contortions of his convoluted crime fighter are high comedy.

Back to DC, my favorite feature in the book is the four page Scribbly. Sheldon Mayer redrew these 1939 pages for us, an act closely akin to time travel. As I am wont to say about Little Lulu: When you get tired of reading comics with improbable characters in improbable situations it's good to turn to a strip like this. In the year this book has been out, I've reread this segment of the saga of the boy cartoonist a dozen times.

On the nostalgia front when I collected DC gold in the late sixties, Creig Flessel's Sandman; Shelly Moldoff's Hawkman; and Irwin Hasen's Wildcat, especially the origin (reprinted here) with a great script by Bill Finger, were all favorites, mostly due to the old-fashioned art styles. On the minus side, the Starman story was weak, and the Spectre ridiculous. Wonder Woman was incomprehensible as always, and the Justice Society of America novel that closes the book had a "ripoff" ending.

Of the remaining second stringers, the Vigilante was solid and Robotman appealing; Johnny Quick and Black Canary were OK. All in all, DC's choices were fairly comprehensive. I only wish Zatara had been included because I think Fred Guardineer's art was a prime product of the Golden Age.

Roy Thomas provides a "gosh-wow" foreward that captures the spirit of hero worship. And the introduction and end notes sketch the history of the company. There are also some short biographies of key writers and artists. And the "house ad" from June 1942 sums it all up: picturing the "peak" of eight monthly anthologies, all jam-packed with "your favorite comic characters." *Action, Adventure, All American, Detective, Flash, More Fun, Sensation,* and *Star Spangled* - recite that when you need an incantation!

Comments, suggestions, questions!
Write to Pat S. Calhoun, c/o
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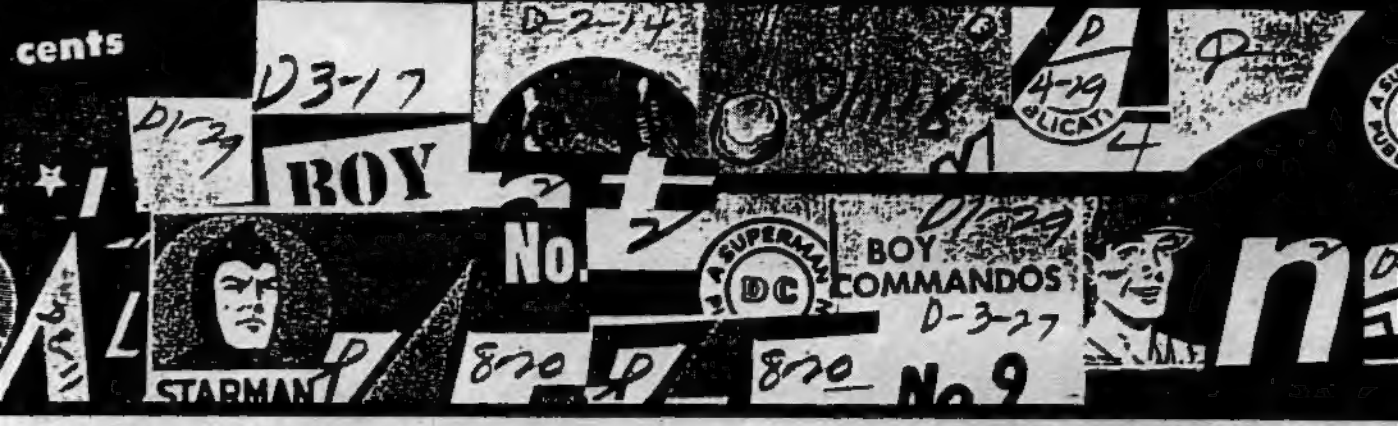


The ULTIMATE PEDIGREE

by

Dr. Pat Kochanek

In the first three installments of this column, several factors about the "Mile High" (Edgar Church) collection were discussed including: 1) the remarkable completeness of the collection, 2) the good sales records for these books, and 3) the predictable arrival date coding (when present). In the final chapter of this four part series characterizing the "Mile High" collection, other key physical features of books from this historic collection of comics will be presented.

COVER CHARACTERISTICS

1) GLOSS AND COLOR INTENSITY

Beautiful cover gloss and intensity of cover colors is one of the most striking features of the "Mile High" books. It is also a feature which is quite consistent from the beginning until the end of the collection. The San Francisco (Tom Riley) collection books (which often have nearly as white pages as the "Mile High" books) generally just do not exhibit quite the same gloss and cover color intensity. To my eye, vibrant color intensity is most notable for red, green, and white areas on the cover. The cover gloss and color intensity on certain select "Mile High" books is outlandish, and these have occasionally been termed "glow in the dark" books. Late 1940 to early 1941 books, and early 1943 books for some reason seem to be the most striking. Examples include the *Marvel Mystery* #13, *More Fun* #s 58 and 61, and *Flash* #47. There are numerous others.

Despite the recent interest in numerical grading systems, it will soon become apparent that most such grading systems will not effectively account for these features. Compared to another otherwise numerical-grade equivalent (say "Mint 95") copy, a million collectors in a row would choose the super-glossy "Mile High" book in a head to head comparison. An optimal grading system should take this into account.

2) LIGHT SHADOWS

Often, "Mile High" collection books exhibit one or two light shadows on the front and/or back cover. These have been called dust shadows in the past, but most likely represent areas of slight oxidation-induced tanning from low intensity light exposure along the edges of some books. This occurred where they did not happen to line up perfectly in the 8 foot stacks in which they were initially stored. Examples of front cover light shadows are shown in the figure (*More Fun* #70, *Boy Commandos* #2, *Flash* #20). Of note, these are generally not visible in the Gerber Photo Journal Guide because the photographs almost uniformly do not include the edges of the books, the place where the light shadows almost always are seen. These light shadows can in a few cases be quite large on the back cover.

PAPER QUALITY

1) WHITENESS

The paper whiteness of the "Mile High" books is exceptional. In the early Golden Age period (1939-1943) it is unsurpassed. For example, in a run of 16 issues of *Action Comics* between number 25 and 72 (1940-1944), only one book (absolutely authentic) had off white pages with very slight tanning. Similarly, having seen 34 of the 43 *More Funs* between #56 and #98, every single book had very white pages. Despite the 1944-1953 books in the "Mile High" collection being newer, their page whiteness is at best similar to the pre-1944 books. On average, these later books are a bit less white. This most likely is due to the more significant compression of the early books at the bottom of the stacks, and the resultant decrease in oxidation. As a result, some of the early books have unbelievably white pages.

2) SUPPLENESS

The paper (both cover and pages) of authentic "Mile High" books show a fresh and bouncy texture which is seen throughout the entire collection. Both the whiteness and suppleness aspect of "Mile High" collection paper quality obviously relates to the non-acidic (no cardboard boxes), cool, dry, and dark storage conditions. The compression of the early books just made the situation even better. There is nothing " magic" about these books. Indeed, improper storage conditions for "Mile High" books

by subsequent owners has ruined numerous issues. This happened to a large number of Fiction House books.

3) SMELL

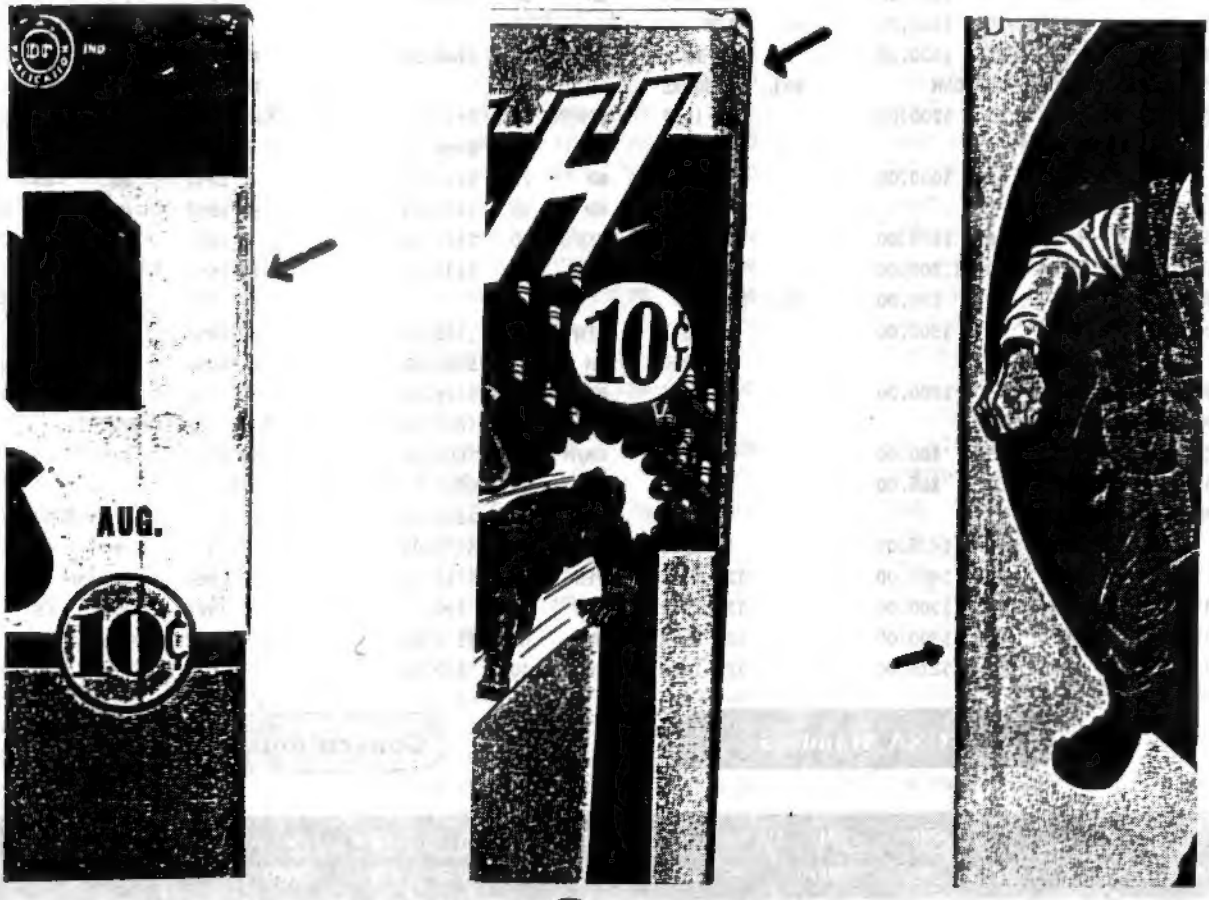
A characteristic smell is present in "Mile High" books which is related to the freshness of the paper and very likely to the odor of the house in which the books were stored. This is almost certainly not a cedar odor as once thought. The smell is strongest in books from the earliest years of the collection which is undoubtedly related to their longer storage in this environment. Note again that subsequent storage conditions can significantly alter the smell of the books, making this factor at times a somewhat variable one. Many "Mile High" collection books still have, however, a consistent characteristic smell.

CONCLUSION

These four chapters (see also issues number 2-4 of the Comic Book Marketplace) have been an attempt to present some of the history and characteristics of the "Mile High" (Edgar Church Collection) books. Hopefully, some of the myths surrounding this historic collection have been clarified. It is also my hope that this type of information will help prevent disbursement of non-authentic books, and simultaneously promote increased awareness and interest in this special collection and other pedigree books.

Special thanks to Gary Carter, Ernie Gerber, Joe Dungan, Ron Pussell, Joe Smejkel, John Verzyl, and Steve Carey, for suggestions and support of this four part project.

Figure Below: (From left to right.) Partial covers of Mile High Copies of *More Fun* #70, *Flash Comics* #20 and *Boy Commandos* #2 showing examples of light promoted oxidation shadows along the edges of the books (see arrows). The very small "light" stain on the *More Fun* #70 is typical. Those on the *Flash* #20 and especially on the *Boy Commandos* #2 are larger than average. Also note that these examples are over-exposed to make the light shadows more visible in reproduction.



CBM SALUTES

A L E X SCHOMBURG

The Golden Age Wizard

by Steve Duin

*(**Editor's note**: The wartime art of Alex Schomburg often shocks contemporary sensibilities with its use of extreme stereotypes. But as Steve Duin, a political reporter for The Oregonian newspaper in Portland, Oregon, points out, the genius of Alex Schomburg is one of a kind in the world of comic book art. CBM is grateful to Mr. Duin and the Oregonian for allowing us to reprint this article. **As testimony to the admiration, respect, and love that we collectors have for your special brand of genious Mr. Schomburg, CBM and all of fandom would like to express a deeply felt thanks for your unique creativity and the joy you have brought to so many fans around the world. Thank you Alex Schomburg.....you are a truly great man with a truly great talent. You will be remembered and revered forever, not only on the beautiful covers you created, but also in the heart of fandom.**)*

When the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor and the war began, America wasted little time in calling Alex Schomburg. The phone rang, a voice whispered, "We need a Captain America," and the line went dead.

That was it. And that was enough. Schomburg sat down in his New York office and began to sketch the cover of another comic book. His mission was simple enough: "Anything to make the Japs look ugly or the Nazis look like punks." He was invariably somewhere over occupied France, or 30 seconds over Tokyo, when the phone rang again and Uncle Sam whispered, "We need a Fighting Yank."

And that was enough.

On cover after cover during the Golden Age of comics and that barbaric age of man, Schomburg captured the forces of "good and evil" in a 7 by 10 inch frame for the newsstands.

The Evil - their Aryan or Asian features bloated in hideous caricature - were tuning up their instruments of death, including the rack, the chopping block, the buzz saw, the barbecue pit, and the Iron Virgin.

The Good - Captain America, The Black Terror, The Human Torch or some other exemplar of American male virtue - always arrived in the nick of time.

All in color, all for a dime.

Several wars later, Schomburg's comic book caricatures still pack a wallop. His covers are, by contemporary standards, a nightmare of racial and sexual stereotyping.

But 40 days of fighting in the Persian Gulf were more than enough to remind us of our frantic need, in times of war, to paint the enemy in satanic colors.

Schomburg served the needy during World War II. The Japanese had their kamikazes, the Nazis their Vergeltungswaffe-2 rockets. America had Alex Schomburg only a phone call away. "I always felt Alex Schomburg was to comic books what Norman Rockwell was to The Saturday Evening Post," says Stan Lee, the long-time editor at Marvel Comics. While Rockwell gave his readers the comforts of home, Schomburg uncorked the horrors of war. He had an amazing eye, an amazing touch, an amazing gift.

And this is the most amazing thing of all: In 1954, after drawing more than 600 of the most compelling, colorful, frightening covers the comics had ever seen, Schomburg said goodbye to New York and the comic racks and vanished.

WONDER COMICS #1, May 1944

**YOUNG ALLIES #3, Jul. 1943,
CAPTAIN AMERICA #46, Apr. 1945**

Those who ever thought to wonder for the better part of the next 25 years figured he was dead and gone.

Nope. Just gone to Ore-gone.

"Would you believe, we thought we were getting old, my wife and I?" Alex Schomburg is sitting at the table of his home. His coffee cup, hooked to his trembling fingers, is dancing in its saucer. Parkinson's disease, Schomburg says. He is 85, and he's gone flying with pen or airbrush for the last time.

Pinned on the walls of each room are the paintings he brought back from previous flights. Each picture is of a different mood, French Impressionist, perhaps, or Saturday Evening Post. In his bedroom hangs a nude in a style reminiscent of Thomas Hart Benton, which Schomburg considers his best work. He pulled the painting out of storage six years ago. His wife, Helen, was raised pretty strict, and while she was alive wouldn't abide that nude out in the open.

There is a priceless quality about Alex Schomburg. You don't want to bend his corners, after all these years, or see his pages yellow. As he shows off some of his comic book covers from the war years, Schomburg explains that he lifted many of his ideas from Life magazine, which delivered dramatic and harrowing photographs from the battle front each week.

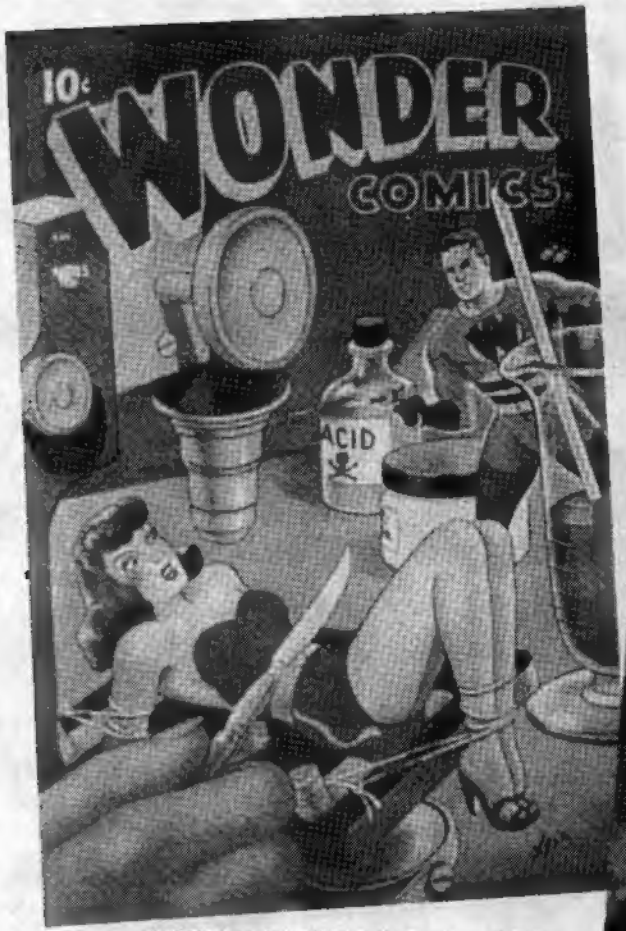
On one of the covers is a fetching woman, beautifully contoured, still glowing after her massage with Schomburg's airbrush. That pose, that figure.

Did he swipe that from LIFE?

"No," Schomburg says, "that's ability." Whenever he retreated into his studio, opened the window into his imagination and leaped through it, that ability was his safety net. Schomburg had a gift for designing women, action, and the post-Armageddon future.

And, when a publisher and the times demanded it, he had a knack for stripping the Japanese and Germans of their humanity.

To page through those comics now is to realize how little has changed in the way we view the enemy when we go to war. Many of the readers who pounced on Schomburg's art were encamped at Army posts - and starved for reading material - or heading to the front lines. These soldiers didn't want to hear that Hitler or Hirohito



WONDER COMICS #15, Jan. 1947
STARTLING COMICS #49, Jan. 1948

was misunderstood, or that they were fighting for anything less than truth, justice and the American way. They delighted in these illustrations of the monstrous wrongs they were sailing off to right. The comics were the pulp propaganda that ferried the troops off to war. "Caricature" is too kind a word for the way Schomburg manhandled the enemy. The Japanese were cast with jaundiced yellow skin, grotesquely slanted eyes and piranha overbites. The Nazis came packaged like midget pro wrestlers. with Col. Klink's monocle and Sgt. Schultz' girth.

Almost always they were out-fitted with the cruel, ingenious tools of torture. If the Japanese weren't bayoneting injured prisoners or shining a "Death Ray" on the Big Apple, they were about to brand the Rising Sun on the tender breasts of a woman tied to a stake. The Nazis were eager to employ boiling acid, the executioner's ax, and the barbecue spit.

One Schomburg cover even showed Nazis injecting poison into candy, then offering the sweets to kids. There was no end to the savagery of the enemy, as depicted by Schomburg.

"There were all sorts of racial caricatures," says Stanley Kauffman, the film reviewer for The New Republic who wrote and edited comic books for three years during the Second World War. "They are deplorable now; I suppose they were deplorable then. "

"But the wartime atmosphere is something else. Television has made a very big difference in the way we think about people on the other side. It's very difficult now to turn enemies into drooling beasts."

And in the '40s? "People took it for granted that was the way you talked about them in the cartoons," says Kauffman. "If you look at Hollywood films from that time, they are close to caricatures, too. The atmosphere of that war doesn't excuse a lot of things, but it explains them."

One of the few commentators of the times who refused to accept the caricatures was writer James Agee, then a film reviewer for "The Nation." He hated what he called Hollywood's "agitprop," movies that turned the enemy into beasts simply to provoke a "cheerful bestiality" in the audience.

Cheering these caricatures, Agee believed, revealed the absence of a "crucially important

moral nerve." And if we surrender to the dehumanizing process, he wrote in 1944, "we are still more likely than otherwise to do things to defeated enemies which both morally and materially, will finally damage us more deeply even than them."

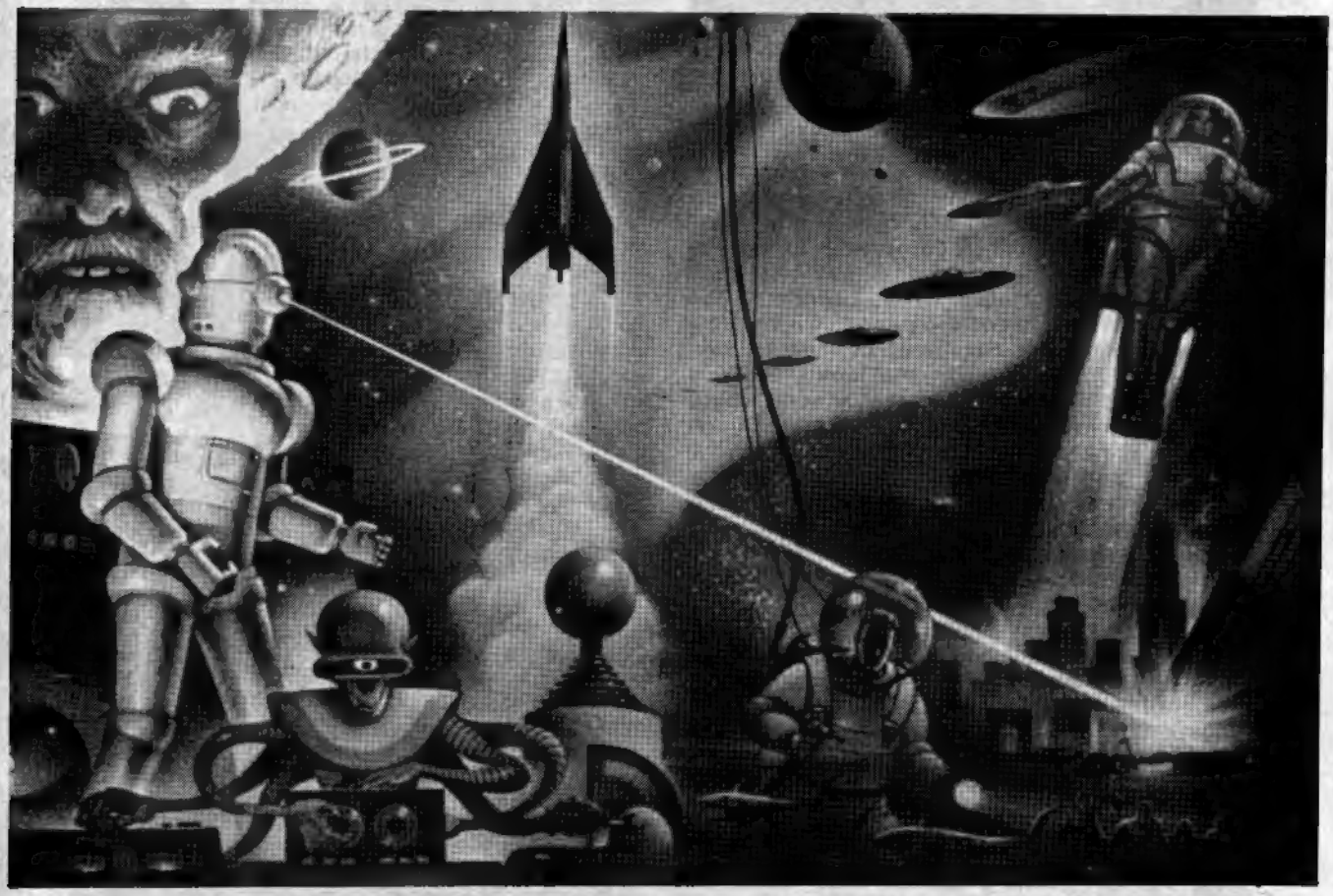
Schomburg never thought he was promoting prejudice or the war effort. When he got the call from Timely Comics or Standard Magazines, Schomburg gave the publishers - and America's wartime psyche - what they wanted.

His covers were products of imagination, not passion. As for why Schomburg's illustrations were in such demand, George Olshevsky - a long-time fan and authority on Timely (the publisher of *Captain America, Human Torch, Sub-Mariner* and *Marvel Mystery*), begs us to remember that, while Schomburg was not Jewish, the publishers at Timely, and many of the staffers, were.

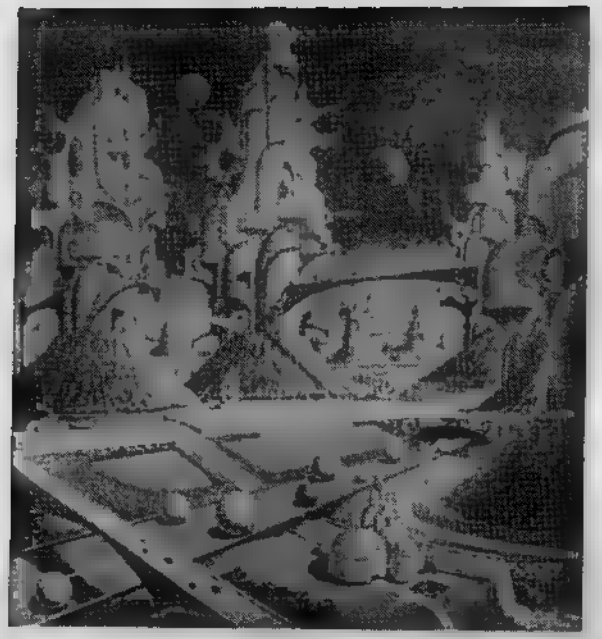
"They were very much aware of the manic anti-Semitism that had engulfed the German nation under Adolf Hitler," Olshevsky has written. "They knew of the Warsaw ghetto, where thousands of Jewish people were systematically being starved to death each month. As ordinary people in America, the Timely staff had little direct influence, but through the medium of the comic book they were able to express their bitterness and frustration. The sincerity and fervor of that damnation of the Axis powers transcended the crudeness of the plots and artwork."

That crudeness came *between* the comics' covers. Little in the stories that followed transcended the power of Schomburg's covers, which he drew independently of the pulp tales. Time and again, he took a great war and focused its terror in a 7-by-10 inch frame. He made the Japanese ugly, the Nazis look like punks - and the readers beg for more.

For all the tricks and treats war played on Schomburg's imagination, it left few marks on him and his home. Nowhere is there any sign of his comic book artistry or the science fiction art that kept his imagination employed in the '50s. The few covers he kept were cut off the comic and packed away in notebooks and boxes. For all the heart and toil and countless hours he poured into them, Schomburg never thought the work was all that special. They were just comic



The fantastic, beautiful, incredible, and magical two page "end papers" all of us marveled at when we opened the front cover of the Winston juvenile science fiction books. No other example of Alex Schomburg's work is so universally recognized and loved the world over. It is a genuine cultural masterpiece of the twentieth century. Many collectors tell the same anecdote; that of staring at this art as they daydreamed and fantasized for hours on end, about aliens, space ships, robots, super science, interplanetary intrigue and all manor of amazing adventures on other worlds.



Schomburg's original concept painting for Stanley Kubrick's "2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY."

books, after all; if his cover was worth the 10-cent price tag, the stories inside usually weren't. National Screen service, a company that made film shorts, paid his $100 weekly salary for drawing film backgrounds until 1944; he had literally done the comic cover artwork in the moonlight. When he got the phone call from the editors at Timely or Standard, he opened that window into his imagination and took that flying leap. It never occurred to him that anyone would keep the comics, much less collect them, much less appraise the original art (none of which he still owns) and sell it for thousands of dollars at auction. Today even the Japanese are avid collectors of Schomburg comics and originals, which can fetch thousands.

"I never dreamed it," Schomburg says, "I never even dreamed it."

And that's why, Schomburg admits now, "I pulled a stupid thing. I just pulled up stakes and didn't let anyone know where I was going." The publishers of several science fiction magazines knew he'd gone west, but with the comic book publishers, Schomburg didn't leave a forwarding address. He didn't know his audience or understand his legacy.

Times were tough after the move. "He still had some followup business from the East Coast, then the whole thing frittered out," says his 56-year-old son, Dick. "Those days for him were very hand-to-mouth." Schomburg remembered searching for work, armed with some of his best science fiction and movie trailer art: "The first thing they wanted to know? 'All this stuff is beautiful but have you done anything in lumber?'"

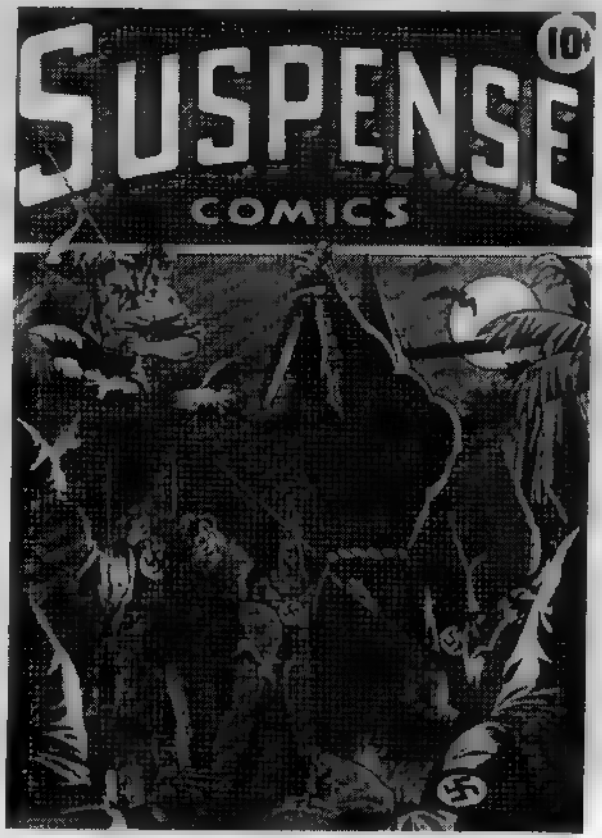
Lumber? After Captain America and the Black Terror, Schomburg could handle lumber. Since the day in 1923, when Schomburg and three of his brothers opened a commercial art studio in New York, he had handled every artistic assignment that came his way, without a day of formal training.

"I guess you could say I was self taught," Schomburg says. "And Self-reliant."

Three thousand miles removed from his *Thrilling* and *Exciting* days, Schomburg survived on whatever he could find. He painted real-estate and neon signs. He drew artist's renderings of how office buildings would look with aluminum awnings. On the good days, he produced those absolutely riveting endpapers for the Winston juvenile science fiction books, the memories of which are forever locked into the memories of every child science fiction reader. And don't forget the color-by-number sketches for the Venus pencil company. He spent the bad days bent over his table-saw, building red and white donation box chimneys for Volunteers of America.

When the bad days began to pile up, Schomburg moved yet again.

"That's when people thought I was dead," he



SUSPENSE #3, Apr. 1944
Considered by many collectors as *the* "quintessential" comic book cover of all time.

The PLANETEERS
HASTE, MEN! WE HAVEN'T A MINUTE TO SPARE!!
AS THE LONG-AWAITED DAY APPROACHES WHEN THEY MUST BEGIN THEIR DANGEROUS RETURN TRIP TO EARTH, THE DARING ARMY OF SCIENTISTS, WITH TOR STILL AS THEIR LEADER, RELOAD THE PRECIOUS EQUIPMENT ABOARD THE "LUNA"!
by ALEX SCHOMBURG
WHILE HIGH UP IN THE RADAR ROOM, TOR'S DAUGHTER HAS DIFFERENT IDEAS IN MIND! ... RICK HASN'T GOT A CHANCE...
THEIR CONVERSATION IS PICKED UP BY RADARMAN DAVIS ... THEN ...

First page of a late 1940s comic book story proposal entitled "the Planeteers" by Alex Schomburg. Note the the superlative layout and design, made even more effective by Alex's attention to detail.

22 year old Alex Schomburg circa the late 1920s

He escaped New York. He got out of a business that has never been very kind to its better craftsmen, then had the tenacity to live long enough for fans of his art to track him down and thank him for the memories.

They still call him up. The phone rings, and Schomburg hears the voice of someone stunned to find him alive. In a day or two they come by, a battered comic book in their hands, asking him if he'll sign the cover for the second time in a half century.

Schomburg nods and pulls out his favorite pen. He writes slowly, savoring his reward, and his hand doesn't shake.

STEVE DUIN is a political columnist for The Oregonian. ROSS HAMILTON is Northwest Magazine's staff photographer.

says. "People thought Schomburg had died."

Did that bother him?

No," Schomburg says, "because I never heard from them."

It took years for his fans to track Schomburg down. He wasn't hiding; he just didn't know anyone was looking for him.

"There was never any discussion in our family about these activities of his making a mark," says his son, Dick. There was never any thought about a reward waiting for him somewhere down the road. Schomburg got $40, maybe $50 for each of the covers he drew. He figured that was fair compensation, at least fair by the standards of an industry in which the artist supplied all the color and the publishers made off with all the dimes.

Film director Stanley Kubrick even called once, asking Schomburg if he could spare a month to help with the artistic development of "2001: A Space Odyssey." Of course, he could. Some of the original concepts and drawings of Kubrick's vision of the future were Schomburg's.

In 1976, Schomburg's phone began to ring again. A Hollywood auction house wanted him to re-create some of his covers from the war. A couple of science fiction junkies in Moscow, Idaho, wanted him to be the guest of honor at their sci-fi convention. Magazine editors probed to see if he had any extra illustrations lying around. A group of artists wondered if he could find the time to accept a lifetime achievement award.

Fifty years ago, Alex Schomburg added considerable glow to the Golden Age of comic books, and delivered lasting illustrations of the "drooling beasts" we believe we're fighting when we go to war. He got $50 for each cover and considered himself lucky when his signature wasn't chopped off in the printing process. In retrospect, he was luckier than most of his peers.

Alex Schomburg

The Golden Age Wizard

as he looks today

THE PRICE OF ADMI$$ION

by

DR. J. KEITH CONTARINO

I'm depressed! How's that for the start of an article? Actually, more than being depressed, I'm worried. Worried about today's youth in general and the place comics (and cards, too) play in kids' lives. Maybe I had better back up a little.

1960 - NO NINTENDO, NO VCRs, NO VIDEO GAMES (hand held or other), NO ELECTRONIC CARS OR BOATS OR ROBOTS, NO CABLE TV. In fact, other than the Mickey Mouse Club every day after school and Saturday morning cartoons, there wasn't a hell of a lot to do, vicariously speaking. The best cartoons weren't even on TV back then, but shown before feature length films downtown at either the Paramount (seated 2,000, counting the two balconies) or at the Warner (only one balcony) theaters. Sometimes, especially during the Summer, there would be two or three hours of just cartoons at one of the theaters. Price of admission was 25 cents or 10 cents and five R. C. Cola caps. There were only three TV stations and two (NBC and CBS) were broadcast from 60 miles away. No UHF at all. Things remained basically like this for five more years and by then I was a teenager anyway.

You might say that this was unique to rural Virginia, but I doubt it. We were still traveling to New York two or three times a year to visit my grandparents, and the only big difference was the late; late, late; early, early; and early shows on TV. These were '40s and '50s black and white films.

So what did a seven to twelve year-old kid do? Well, we played soldiers, cowboys and indians, hiked through the woods, collected snakes and frogs, played sports and--best of all--escaped into the fantasy realm of comics. Comics were everywhere and literally everyone read them, even most girls. They read Katy Keene, the Archie Books, some Harveys and Marvels' Millie/Patsy Walker/Chili, etc. line. Boys read everything else and what an assortment abounded!! We had Carl Barks Ducks, *Mickey Mouse*, *Four Color* TV/Movie Adaptations, *Classic Illustrated*, DC's Sci-Fi line; Marvels' (Atlas) Horror/Fantasy books; Warner Bros. cartoon characters; Harveys; Westerns; war books; and DC's phenomenal Super Hero line-up.

We read comics day and night. We collected, traded, read and re-read these suckers. We'd carry 'em around rolled up in our back pockets (or hidden down our pants) We took 'em to the dinner table. We took 'em on vacations. We took 'em in the car to church on Sundays. It seemed wherever we went, we had comics with us, and this was before any Marvel Super Heroes existed! We read these books cover to cover. I could tell you anything about any comic I had just by glancing at the cover, since I had read every book so often it was memorized. We didn't know who wrote or drew them, as credits on comics didn't become popular until a few years later with Marvel; but we all could recognize our favorite artists by style (mine were Carmine Infantino, Steve Ditko and Jack Kirby). We knew which ducks were done by the Duckman, although Carl Barks' name never appeared anywhere on any issue. He was the "Good Artist." The rest were hacks compared to him.

What we didn't know or care about was how much they would be worth six months, one year or 20 years later. Who cared? We read and loved those books for what they were and what they did for us They allowed us to enter a fantastic other world where our already vivid imaginations could run wild. There was a comic for every kid in every possible mood or frame of mind. Wherever you wanted to go, there was a 10 cent ticket waiting for you. It even got better when Marvel came up with characters like Dr. Strange and Spiderman a few years later, although I stopped purchasing the horror titles for about a year when they cut down the stories from three to two and added a Super Hero. (Even stubborn me couldn't resist seeing *Spiderman* No 6 on the stands.)

So, why am I depressed? Because, it seems, few kids are reading the comics they buy any more. We just finished the big New York City June show, and this point was driven home again and again. While it certainly is true some kids read their new comics, it is also true they appear more worried about their future value than future story lines or art work. I did notice more kids picking up Silver Age and, at first, I was encouraged by this. I thought, hey--maybe these kids realize the magic is by-in-large gone from the new books and are looking at the older ones to discover what I grew up with. So--I started talking with the kids and asking them why they wanted certain Silver Age books and not others. I think you can guess 90% of the responses: "*Spiderman* is hot." "CVM says this book is certain to go up in value." Etc., etc., ad nauseam. One kid and his father epitomized this abominable

behavior. The kid seemed all right and was trying to purchase some Silver Age *Spiderman* and others from my brother and me. The father was a well dressed, articulate, white-haired gentleman who could have been a lawyer, doctor or successful businessman. He was also an overbearing jerk; and, since I was involved in another deal, I let my brother handle these two (sorry, Peter). I missed the actual exchange, but Peter offered them a package deal of $75 on over $100 worth of books. A very good deal, one they should have jumped at. The father pulled my brother aside and told him, "Look, the only reason I let this kid buy comics is to teach him about business. You'll take what I offer on these books or we'll walk. He could care less about any of them, and you'll take $70 and that's it."

Well, my brother is a much nicer person than I am, and instead of telling this jerk to take a hike, he took the offer. I would have told the guy that he was teaching his child to be rude and abrasive to someone trying to give him a deal, and that was not only inappropriate but bad business. I would have re-priced the books at $100 and told him to hit the road (actually, use your imagination as to what I would have really said).

My brother and I bend over backwards trying to give kids deals, as we both feel kids are out of touch with the fantasy/escapist aspect of comics. Unfortunately, only one kid came to our table looking for old books for the books' sakes. The rest were like the father above.

This one kid came up with his mother. He was looking for old *Silver Surfers*. I asked him why, and he told me he thought the Surfer was really neat and was his favorite character. He went on about his surfboard and powers. I really felt this kid understood what the Surfer was all about. I asked him if he had an *FF* #48. He laughed and said he'd never be able to afford one. I asked him what he'd do with one if he had it, and he said it would be the best comic in his collection and would never get rid of it. Magic words these. I happened to have five copies, one a VG--so I gave it to him for free. His mother thought I was nuts and wondered what I was getting out of this, so I told her that encouraging kids to continue collecting for collecting's sake and not profit was in my best interests also. Besides, her son was a nice kid and was very appreciative.

Now, I'm not relating this to pat myself on the back or convince you all what a nice guy I am. I'm not. I am, however, convinced that we are losing a whole generation of new collectors, and we should be doing all we can to encourage these kids. Charging $5 for *Silver Surfer* #50 and promoting it as a good investment is not the way to do this.

So, I'm worried. I'm worried that this attitude of new comics as investments only is going to ruin our industry as a whole. Marvel understands this concept so well that they produce *X-Men* #1 with five different covers, knowing none will be read. Of the two and one-half million *Spiderman* #1's printed, it is estimated that fewer than 200,000 were actually read. That means 2.3 million MINT copies may exist. Thirty years from now there will still be two million or so.

Scarce, huh?

What makes Silver Age in high grade so scarce is we read the hell out of almost every copy. If we bought more than one copy, it was to trade them later; and they'd be read by someone else. Very few copies escaped our destructive hands. How valuable would *Showcase* #4 be if there were two million mint copies around today?

I blame this on this "new product is good investment" nonsense. I've seen the ads, read and heard the arguments and I still think it's nonsense. Sure, as long as mass stupidity exists, there's a lot of money to be made in the new product. But, if no one's reading it and developing emotional ties to it, where will the back issue interest in it be in a few years? I mentioned the five *X-Men* covers, and there are more examples. I recently heard Comico had published some issues of their titles with subliminal messages, and there may even be a court case involved. I suppose these books will then become expensive, sought after collectibles.

So--what to do? I don't know. I'd be happy if we'd all realize a problem does exist. I'd be even happier if all dealers would encourage kids to buy comics with characters they like and become emotionally attached to. Especially if that character is Silver and flies through the sky on a surfboard!

Write to J. Keith Contarino c/o CBM

" Of the two and one-half million Spiderman #1's printed, it is estimated that fewer than 200,000 were actually read. That means 2.3 million MINT copies may exist. Thirty years from now, there will still be two million or so. Scarce, huh ? "

CBM FORUM

THE SILVER AGE WAS WHEN ?

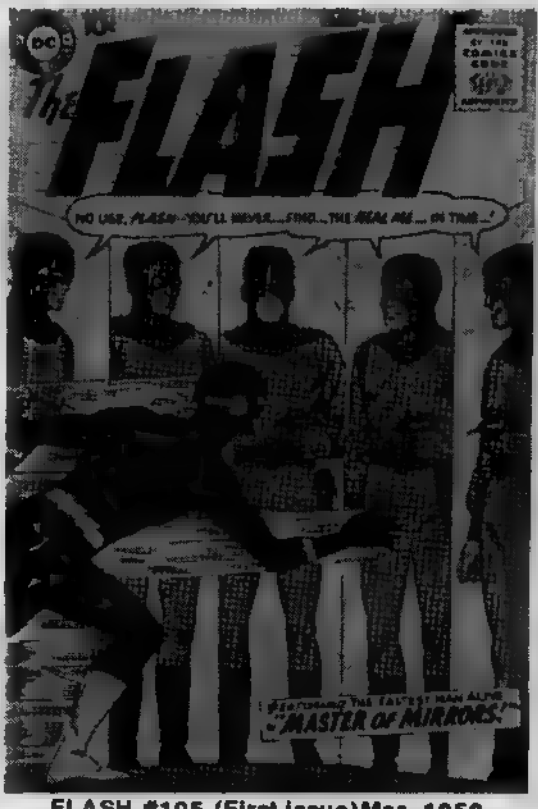
by Tony Starks

'Any discussion of historical ages for comic books must first recognize that comic books are a commercial art form, intended for mass market consumption. If a comic book appeals to the public and sells well, it has achieved its objective. While many comics have had beautiful artwork, others fine storytelling, and a lucky few both, ultimately what mattered was.... **did the comic book sell?**

Historical ages for comic books, then, would logically be based upon periods of time in which comics were at "peaks" of sales popularity. Thus far, these peaks have occurred, for the most part, during times when the superhero was in ascendancy. In my opinion the public seems to enjoy the exploits of the costumed, super-powered adventurer more than any other genre.

To illustrate this, the Golden Age of comics began with *Action* #1, June, 1938. What followed was an explosion of new publishers, titles, and characters. By the end of 1941, more than 30 publishers were producing over 160 titles! After World War II ended in 1945, comics lost some of their appeal to the public, probably due to the fact that so many characters' story lines involved the war. By 1947, a drastic decrease in the number of superhero titles had taken place, and numerous publishers ceased publication.

Thus far, most collector/historians seem content to write their definitions regarding the beginning of the Silver Age based on two popular viewpoints: "The Silver Age began when the Golden Age superheroes were brought back in a new format" (*Showcase* #4, Sep/Oct 1956), or "the Silver Age began when the first superhero appeared on a continuous basis after 1950". Depending on how one defines "continuous", this could be *Strange Adventures* #9 (Jun 1951, 1st Capt. Comet), *Phantom Stranger* #1 (Aug/Sep 1952), or *Detective Comics* #225, (Nov 1955, 1st J'onn J'onzz). Depending on one's definition of "superhero comic", one could even nominate *Jimmy Olsen* #1 (Sep/Oct 1954).



FLASH #105 (First issue)Mar. 1959

Instead of writing definitions that attempt to prove or disprove a specific book, we need to identify the historical age itself. It is commonly accepted that the Golden Age was a period of time in which comic books, particularly superhero comics, were extremely popular. It would follow that the Silver Age was a period of resurgent popularity of comic books, led by the superhero. We need only identify a period of time in which there was a rapid increase in the number of superhero titles published, and look for when that increase began in earnest.

Did the number of titles published take off after the publication of either *Strange Adventures* #9 or *Phantom Stranger* #1 came out? No. After *Jimmy Olsen* #1? Nope! After *Detective* #225 arrived? Afraid not. After *Showcase* #4? Well, maybe. Besides the ongoing issues of *Showcase*, *Lois Lane* #1, *Challengers of the Unknown* #1 and *Adventure Comics* #247 (the first Legion of Superheroes), all came out exactly one and one half years later (Apr/May 1958). But *Lois Lane* was just another Superman title, Challengers were not really a super hero team, and it was another one and one half years before the 2nd Legion of Superheroes' appearance (*Adventure* #267, Dec 1959).

myself included, would disagree. Great, and not so great comics were published in both decades. *X-Men* #94-143, *Swamp Thing* #1-10, *Conan* #1-24, *Green Lantern* #76-89 and *Detective* #466-481 are examples of 70's comics that are the equal of anything done in the 60's. Several of the titles specifically identified as being of lower quality, I must say I personally enjoyed. *Nova* was fun, *Ms. Marvel* looked good and *Omega*, while weird, was moving towards something dramatic when [redacted].

Truly, one man's trash is another's treasure.

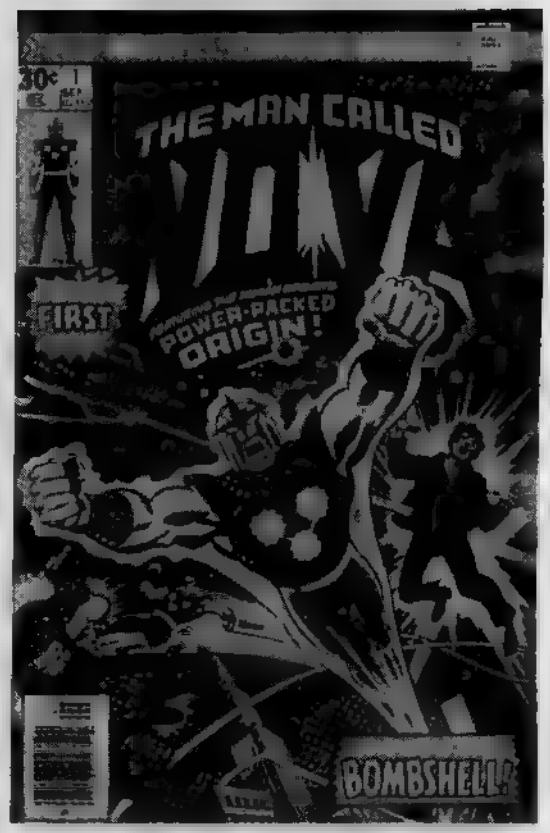
I am not certain that the Silver Age of comics has ended! We may still be in it. If it ended, it was not due so much to cancellations and plummeting sales like the end of the Golden Age, but because the number of publishers and titles reached new stratospheric heights in the 1980's.

Direct distribution of comic books was arranged in the late 1970's as an alternative to wholesale distribution for comic specialty shops. Comics were sold at larger discounts to specialty shops on a nonreturnable basis. Unintentionally, this made it possible for small publishers to sell their titles directly to comic shops. Rather than print 250,000 copies of a comic book, hoping to sell 80,000 to 100,000 copies to the general public, a publisher could profitably print and sell 20,000 - 30,000 copies directly to comic shops.

In 1981, Pacific Comics became the first publisher to print and sell comics for the direct sales market only. Two years later, more

CAPTAIN VICTORY #1

THE MAN CALLED NOVA #1



publishers were selling more titles than had existed in the past 40 years. Most were small publishers relying on direct sales. Realistically, I think one might end the Silver Age in 1981 when Pacific Comics opened up the direct sales market.

Considering everything, it is not so much that the Silver Age died per se, as a NEW AGE, yet to be named, began. I will leave the naming of this new age to others.

In that spirit, allow me to briefly suggest a logical 2nd choice. One could easily begin the Silver Age with *Showcase #4* for all the reasons stated in previous issues. The cover of this book is so dynamic, that it is easy tobelieve this comic jump-started the Silver Age. It would also be possible to end the Silver Age sometime in 1972, either with the last issue of *Green lantern* (Apr/May 1972) or of *New Gods* and *Forever People* (Oct/Nov 1972). Although DC successfully revived *Green Lantern* in 1976 and *New Gods* less successfully in 1977, these cancellations indicate industry giant DC was struggling during this time period. A 1972 ending date for the Silver Age eliminates strife concerning books like Adams' *Green Lanterns*, Smith's *Conans*, the 1968 Marvels and Kirby's 4th world DC's. Most would then be nicely placed in the Silver Age, thus reducing some of the associated controversy.

Thanks for reading and thanks to CBM for the opportunity to discuss this interesting topic.

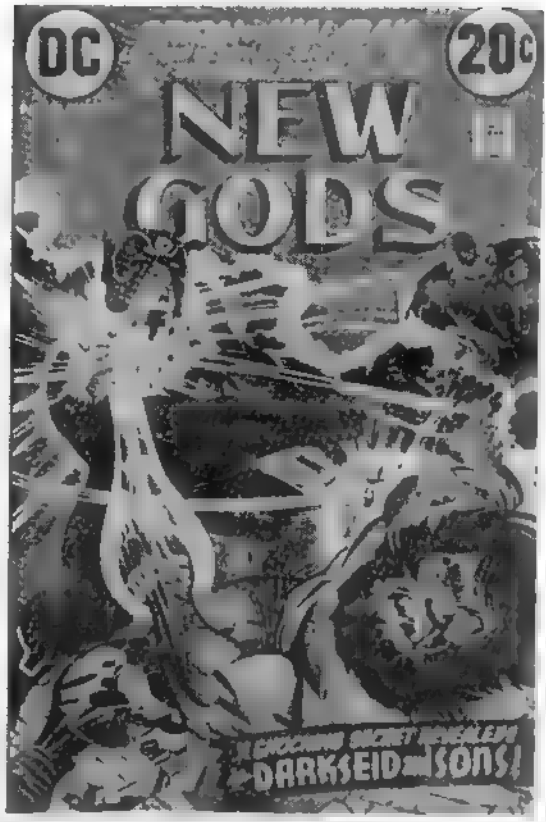
(What's your opinion dear reader ? ? ? Editor)

How about after *Flash* #105 (Mar 1959) hit the newsstands? Pilot to tower, we have lift-off! Aquaman was reintroduced in *Adventure Comics* #260 (Apr 1959). *Brave and Bold* became a tryout format a la *Showcase* and Supergirl was introduced in *Action Comics* #252 (May 1959) The Fly by Simon & Kirby 1st appears (Jun 1959) and gets his own title two months later (Aug 1959) *Space Adventures* #33 (Mar 1960, 1st Capt Atom by Ditko) hits the stands. After *Showcase* appearances in late 1959, Green Lantern gets his own book (Aug 1960). Three issues of *Brave and Bold* leads to *JLA* #1 (Nov 1960). Hawkman is re-introduced in *Brave And Bold* #34 (Mar 1961). *Rip Hunter* #1 comes out (Apr 1961), following his *Showcase* appearances from 1959. *Amazing Adventures* #1 (Jun 1961) introduces the 1st Marvel superhero, Dr. Droom. *Jaguar* #1 arrives (Sep 1961). Sea devils get their own book (Oct 1961), following *Showcase* appearances in 1960, and the Silver Age Atom debuts in *Showcase* #34 One month later(Nov 1961), *Fantastic Four* #1 arrives on the newsstands and the pace of new title introductions becomes even more frantic as Marvel Comics enters the arena. The beginning of the Silver Age of Comics? Based on the reasoning and evidence stated above, the conclusion seems clear. I propose that the Silver Age of comics really began with *Flash* #105, March 1959!

Determining the end of the Silver Age, however, is not nearly so clear cut! Like the Golden Age, the end of the Silver Age should be

GREEN LANTERN-GREEN ARROW #89

NEW GODS #11



marked by plummeting sales and large numbers of cancelled titles. This presents a problem however. While there were some cancelled titles and sales slumped for several publishers, it was not nearly as dramatic as the events which signalled the end of the Golden Age. Archie and Charlton stopped publishing most of their few superhero titles by 1967 and ACG went out of business entirely. After 1970, Gold Key issued mostly reprints of their superheroes We are not talking about many titles and the publishers themselves continued in business. D.C. had slumping sales in the early 70's and cancelled some titles. Still, they continued to introduce new titles throughout the decade.

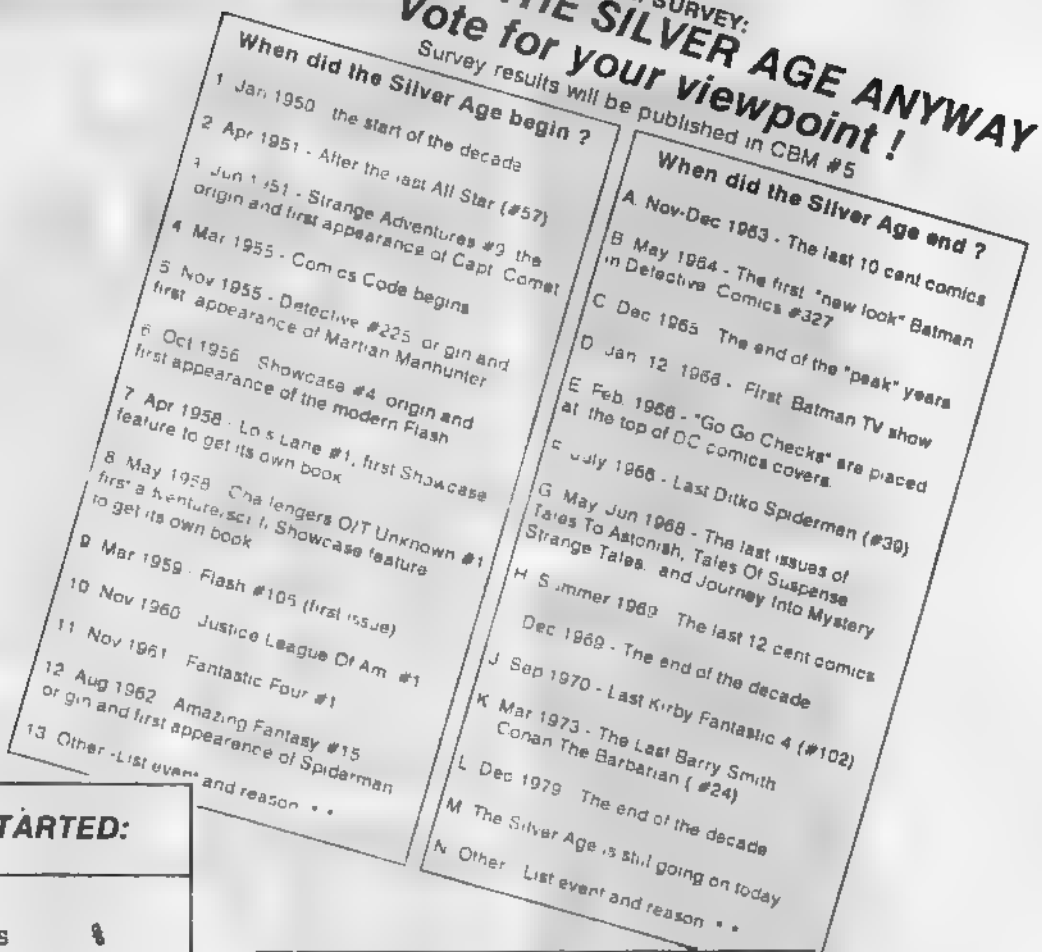
Meanwhile, Marvel Comics rolled mightily along, introducing new titles and characters regularly in the 70's, many quite successful None of their major titles were cancelled and most of their 1968 titles enjoyed long runs, many surviving to this date. During the 70's, Marvel introduced some of todays most popular characters; New X-Men, Wolverine, Punisher and Ghost Rider

The argument commonly advanced against extending the Silver Age past 1968-70 (proposed in a previous CBM Forum) is that comics from the 70's were too poor in quality ("refuse" and "garbage") to be part of the Silver Age. I feel this argument lacks perspective, as it assumes that it is universally agreed upon that comics of the 70's were generally of low quality. Many collectors

SURVEY RESULTS:

WHEN WAS THE SILVER AGE ANYWAY ?

CBM SURVEY:
Vote for your viewpoint !
Survey results will be published in CBM #5



When did the Silver Age begin ?

1 Jan 1950 - the start of the decade

2 Apr 1951 - After the last All Star (#57)

3 Jun 1951 - Strange Adventures #9 the origin and first appearance of Capt. Comet

4 Mar 1955 - Comics Code begins

5 Nov 1955 - Detective #225 or gin and first appearance of Martian Manhunter

6 Oct 1956 - Showcase #4 origin and first appearance of the modern Flash

7 Apr 1958 - Lois Lane #1, first Showcase feature to get its own book

8 May 1958 - Challengers O/T Unknown #1 first a ventures/sci fi Showcase feature to get its own book

9 Mar 1959 - Flash #105 (first issue)

10 Nov 1960 - Justice League Of Am #1

11 Nov 1961 - Fantastic Four #1

12 Aug 1962 - Amazing Fantasy #15 or gin and first appearence of Spiderman

13 Other -List event and reason . .

When did the Silver Age end ?

A Nov-Dec 1963 - The last 10 cent comics

B May 1964 - The first "new look" Batman in Detective Comics #327

C Dec 1965 - The end of the "peak" years

D Jan 12 1966 - First Batman TV show

E Feb 1966 - "Go Go Checks" are placed at the top of DC comics covers.

F July 1966 - Last Ditko Spiderman (#39)

G May Jun 1968 - The last issues of Tales To Astonish, Tales Of Suspense Strange Tales, and Journey Into Mystery

H Summer 1969 - The last 12 cent comics

Dec 1969 - The end of the decade

J Sep 1970 - Last Kirby Fantastic 4 (#102)

K Mar 1973 - The Last Barry Smith Conan The Barbarian (#24)

L Dec 1979 - The end of the decade

M The Silver Age is still going on today

N Other - List event and reason . .

THE SILVER AGE STARTED:

	Date	Votes	%
1.	Jan 1950	1	0.11%
2.	Apr 1951	0	0.00%
3.	Jun 1951	2	0.22%
4.	Mar 1955	27	3.02%
5.	Nov 1955	242	27.07%
6.	Oct 1956	514	57.49%
7.	Apr 1958	0	0.00%
8.	May 1958	5	0.56%
9.	Mar 1959	62	6.94%
10.	Nov 1960	9	1.01%
11.	Nov 1961	14	1.57%
12.	Aug 1962	12	1.34%
13.	Other	6	0.67%

THE SILVER AGE ENDED:

	Date	Votes	%
A.	Dec 1950	2	0.22%
B.	May 1964	0	0.00%
C.	Dec 1965	1	0.11%
D.	Jan 1966	91	10.18%
E.	Feb 1966	101	11.30%
F.	Jul 1966	16	1.79%
G.	Jun 1968	111	12.42%
H.	Sum 1969	309	34.56%
I.	Dec 1969	256	28.64%
J.	Sep 1970	1	0.11%
K.	Mar 1973	4	0.45%
L.	Dec 1979	0	0.00%
M.	On going	2	0.22%
N.	Other	0	0.00%

The winner and still champion:
SHOWCASE #4, Oct 1956

CBM *presents* SLEEPERS

by

Sean Linkenback

This issue of CBM, I am pleased to reprint a reader's letter and my comments on Alternate Choices for **"Most Undervalued Golden Age Comics"**:

Dear Sean,

Here are some "Sleepers" to add to your list:

1) BATMAN #1 - Yeah, Detective #27 is the first appearance of Batman and is currently #1 on the top ten Golden Age books, but let's take another look at Batman #1, of course, it's the first in a series which has run uninterruped for 50 years. It is also an origin issue, the first appearance of Catwoman, the first and second appearances of the Joker, the last Golden Age solo appearance of Batman, and the fourth appearance of Robin. It also Boasts a classic cover of Batman and Robin swinging on their Bat-ropes. In my opinion, the best Batman/Robin cover to date. It is also the first and last time that Batman uses a gun to kill. Batman also uses a Bat-rope to hang a monster. This book will soon equal or surpass Whiz #2 for the #5 spot on the top ten.

Others that should require no explanation:

2. SUBMARINER #1
3. HUMAN TORCH #1
4. ALL FLASH #1
5. WONDER WOMAN 31
6. ACE COMICS #11
7. GREEN LANTERN #1
8. POLICE COMIS #1
9. PLASTIC MAN #1
10. MILITARY COMICS #1
11. BLACK HAWK #9
12. PEP COMICS #1
13. PEP COMICS #22
14. RED RAVEN #1
15. ALL SELECT #1
16. WHIZ #25
17. CAPTAIN MARVEL JR. #1
18. SPECIAL EDITION COMICS #1
19. GREEN HORNET #1
20. THE FUNNIES #57
21. CAPTAIN MIDNIGHT #1

.Thanks for listening!
John Miachnik, Minnesota

Many thanks to you, John, and to the other CBM readers who contributed suggestions to this column. I've commented on each of John's proposals based on my perception of the market at this time. I've also taken into consideration the feedback from dealers at the San Diego Con as well as my regular contacts from all over the country. Please note that I have listed the books in the same order as John listed them, so let's get to it!

1) ***BATMAN* #1** - I generally agree with most all of the facts to support this one with the exception that it is the fourth appearance of Robin. I personally think *World's Fair 1940* beat *Batman* #1 to the stands. Be that as it may, on one hand I agree that *Batman* #1 will replace *Whiz* #2, as the fifth, most valuable comic on my list of undervalued books. On the other hand, look around at any major show. There seem to be many more *Batman* #1's than there are buyers. Not so with *Whiz* #2. This book is fairly rare and, contrary to some dealers in Hartsdale's opinion, it is easy to sell in all shapes (witness the Mile High at $74,000).

2) ***SUBMARINER* #1** - Although this book looks inexpensive when compared to many of its DC counterparts, its attractiveness fades a little when one realizes that Submariner already appeared in a year and a half's worth of *Marvel Mystery's* and three issues of *Human Torch*. Even so, I feel that *Submariner* #1 will eventually reach the approximate value of *All Star* #1.

3) ***HUMAN TORCH* #1** - A better investment than *Submariner* #1, this was the first timely character to be given its own title (pre Captain America #1). As timelys continue to gain status and general interest, this comic should do well in the coming years.

4) ***ALL FLASH* #1** - A great book, which very nearly made my first list. This great comic sports a beautiful cover and came out a few months before *Green Lantern* #1. The word "All" in front of Flash seems

to scare some collectors, but it means just what is says - this book contained nothing but Flash stories. It should go up in price to at least 75-80% guide value of *Green Lantern* #1.

5) ***WONDER WOMAN*** **#1** - Although it is hard to rate this one as good as *All Star* #8, or *Sensation* #1, it is still very attractively priced, but approach this one with caution. Unfortunately, at this point in history, it is still a male oriented comic collecting world, and it seems that most enthusiasts primarily collect male superheroes.

6) ***ACE COMICS*** **#11** - I personally love this book and think it is very hard to find and undervalued. The Phantom never had a big impact in comics, not even getting his own series till 1962 (now that is undervalued). Phantom collectors might be better advised to look for *Future Comics* #1, which has his origin and first comic size appearance of Long Ranger.

7) ***GREEN LANTERN*** **#1** - Another very easy to sell key Golden Age that should climb in value to 50 to 60% of the first appearance (*All American* #16). This one is very hard to find in high grade because the black cover shows every speck of wear! When this one does start to climb, it will make *All Flash* #1, look even more attractive.

8) ***POLICE COMICS*** **#1** - A great comic! Origin and first appearance of one of the most recognized and imitated characters in comics. Top stories and characters and excellent potential for the future.

9) ***PLASTIC MAN*** **#1** Another great comic and one of the few non-DC super hero titles to survive into the Silver Age and the comics code! This comic also has good potential.

10) ***MILITARY COMICS*** **#1** - Start of the top notch *Blackhawk* series. A successful revival of this series could really propel this book to new heights. Otherwise only moderate appeal to newer/younger collectors who may pass it over for more modern superheroes.

11) ***BLACKHAWK*** **#9** - This is a book I would have to pass on, since it did not appear until late 1944, early 1945. It is much more available than the earlier Golden Age comics and high grade copies are available. These mid 40s Quality issues are actually easier to locate in high grade than the early DC issues! (Try locating *Blackhawk* #108, #109, or #110 in high grade.)

12) ***PEP COMICS*** **#1** - Even though the guide estimates only 150 of these exist, it seems to me that they turn up at shows fairly frequently with not a lot of interest shown in them. I feel a much better pick would be #17 with the first Hangman. He seems to be the most popular of the MLJ characters at this time.

13) ***PEP*** **#22** - I cannot argue the importance of this trend setting comic. I can say, however, that I am very rarely asked for it. I feel this comic will almost always be passed over in favor of Superhero first issues or origins by the vast majority of collectors.

14) ***RED RAVEN*** **#1** Sometime in the late 70's this went from being a top 40-50, to being one of the fifteen most valuable (more than *Flash* #1 or *All American* #16) and then went back down to 40 or 50. Why it went up in the first place is a mystery to me! Timely collectors tell me it is really *Human Torch* #1. I suppose the chronology supports this fact, but I've looked through it several times and have yet to find even a single picture of the Human Torch (just kidding). Although the art is very nice, I'm still reluctant to give this an "A" rating as an investment.

15) ***ALL SELECT*** **#1** - A much better choice than suggestion #14 (above). This is what I remember timely for .... Schomburg, Captain America, Human Torch, and Submariner; beautiful cover, great book, and highly recommended.

16) ***WHIZ*** **#25** - A good book. I'm not sure why *Master* #21 and 22 have four prices and are higher in the guide than this issue. The success of Captain Marvel Jr. prompted the whole Marvel family and later even Superboy and, still later, Supergirl. Highly recommended!

17) ***CAPTAIN MARVEL JR.*** **#1** - This comic came out a year after *Whiz* #25 and already goes for more than guide, so it is hard to recommend it more than the #25. But it is the first issue of the second most popular Fawcett character and does have a beautiful Raboy cover.

18) ***SPECIAL EDITION COMICS*** **#1** - If *Captain Marvel Adventures* #2, had come out as #3, this would be a supervaluable book! As it is, it is a "pre-Captain Marvel Adventure #1" comic with Captain Marvel in it. Similar to a *World's Fair 1940*. If *Batman* #1 had come out as #2, the price of the *World's Fair* would be astronomically higher.

19) ***GREEN HORNET*** **#1** - One of the most beautiful covers of the Golden Age, this book has seen strong demand in recent years and should continue to do so with interest from TV, radio and movie collectors.

20 & 21) ***FUNNIES*** **#57**, and ***CAPTAIN MIDNIGHT*** **#1** - Similar to the Phantom, Captain Midnight never caught on in comics like he did in other mediums. Hard to recommend either.

That about wraps it up for this issue. Please mail your suggestions, comments, and questions to:

SLEEPERS

The COMIC BOOK MARKETPLACE

P.O. Box 180900

Coronado, CA 92178-0900

The Fandom Zone

by Alan Dulfon

Gentlemen, gentlemen, please! Let us have some orderly conduct in this august assembly wherein all comic book collectors big and small, from every corner of the galaxy, have gathered together in the hope of resolving the age-old question which innumerable great thinkers have pondered since time immemorial: **When did the Silver Age begin, and when did it end?** Personally, I can remember one time back in 1957 when I was just four years old, sitting on the stoop in front of my house with my little friend Joey, chewing bubble gum and reading comics, and he turned to me and said, "Boy, this Silver Age is sure swell, ain't it?" And I said, "You bet!" Anyway, although I am certainly the most insignificant collector amongst you, still, feeling some inner necessity, I request permission from all of my illustrious senior collector-brethren (and sistren) to submit the following proposal.

First, I think we need to understand that when we attempt to rigidly define a "Silver Age," we're trying to physically embody a concept which really has no clearly ascertainable dimensions, inasmuch as that period was characterized by a special type of quality, beauty, imaginativeness, and originality which provoked a very special type of feeling within each one of us individually at the time. It moved us, inspired us, uplifted us—in essence, gave us a little fast, temporary relief from the various discomforts commonly associated with material existence, hay fever, and nasal congestion—and for this reason our heart's affection was captured. Can such subtle things as affection, beauty, and feelings be brought into the laboratory and dissected for scientific examination and concrete definition? And if they can, who will volunteer to clean up the mess afterwards?

We speak of the Silver Age as a renaissance in the comic field, but did the European Renaissance actually begin with Nicola Pisano's *Adoration of the Magi* in 1260, or with Giotto's *Ognissanti Madonna* in 1310? Did it end the month of the completion of Michaelangelo's *Last Judgement* in 1541, or the month Veronese's *Apotheosis of Venice* was completed in 1585? For that matter, there are even things of the sensory physical world to which we cannot ascribe rigid boundry lines. Where does the land end and the ocean begin? For the lack of an answer, we have the term "beach." When does daytime end and night begin, and vice-versa? Hence the terms "dusk" and "dawn."

We also describe the Silver Age as a time of very forceful creative energy which was previously inactive. But within our realm of experience, what type of forceful energy do we know of that begins immediately at its peak and stops on a dime? Rather, we've seen that in general, anything of

substantial magnitude and momentum builds up gradually before reaching a peak, and slows down gradually before coming to a full stop.

At best, we may draw some comparison between the borders of the Silver Age and the cited example of the rising and setting of the sun, in that although there is a certain hazy period inbetween the light and dark, there are also certainly times when the sky is fully light and fully dark. This "hazy period" may be likened to the *general* manifestation of comics which in our estimation lacked all the things which gave us our *joie de vivre,* but wherein we were still finding a few genuine glimmers scattered about which gradually increased in number to radiant proportions, but over the course of time regrettably diminished to nil.

In accordance with this particular angle of vision, we may perhaps find it easier to agree that we perceived the "dawn" of the Silver Age appearing with the first rays of the Martian Manhunter's debut in *Detective* #225 in the autumn of 1955; then a short time later we noticed the sun globe itself beginning to appear on the horizon in the autumn of '56 with the debut of The Flash in *Showcase* #4, and then still later we beheld the full form of the sun in the sky at the time of *Fantastic Four* #1 in the autumn of '61. Then the Silver Age sun ran its glorious course across the sky of our adolescence, nourishing and satisfying all of our most innocent hungers for adventure, fantasy, and humor, and we began to perceive its disappearance back into the horizon around the spring of 1968, when our heroes in the pages of *Tales to Astonish, Tales of Suspense,* and *Strange Tales* were all divided up into their own titles. Then sometime later, by the autumn of '70, we felt: "Oh, the original X-Men stories are finished (#66), and Jack Kirby has drawn his last issue of the *Fantastic Four* (#102). The sun globe is now certainly entirely gone from our vision, and darkness has almost completely enveloped us. Still, a faint trace of light remains in the form of Barry Smith's work on *Conan the Barbarian* and Neal Adams' work on *Green Lantern/ Green Arrow.*"

The latter series ended in the spring of '72. But our solace is this: if this theory is accepted and applied all over the continental United States and its territorial possessions, then that would also put the Golden Age into its appropriate historical perspective as the same rotating "sun" (i.e. the very first rays being *Funnies on Parade* in 1933, etc....and the very final spark being thoroughly extinguished with *All Star* #57 in 1951). AND—it means that the sun may unexpectedly rise yet again! Of course if it doesn't, then for the many of us whose budget doesn't comfortably accommodate the acquisition of a vast trove of original Golden and Silver Age treasures, in the absence of natural sunlight at least we've still got the electric light of reprints and microfiche. But you never know; it may happen just on the weekend that you're out of town at a convention, so make sure the baby-sitter keeps a vigilant watch and you've got a pager.

The 1991 San Diego Comic Book Convention

Huckster Highlights

COMIC BOOKS
MOTOR CITY COMICS

THE PRICE OF THEIR TOYS

by Dr. John Townsend

They reminded me of road-weary athletes setting up their workout areas the night before a meet. Exhausted, yet economical in their movements, they located their booths and tables and arranged logos, boxes, pegs and books in a surprisingly short time. They were the dealers, many of them only a few days past the Chicago con, and again unpacking what they had just recently bound, zippered, taped and hauled.

As a writer for CBM, I was able to spend July Fourth Eve observing the setup of the largest comic convention in the world. It was the night of the pros, preparing for an estimated 20,000 collectors in the next four days. This was comics stripped down to those who know comics best, from pre-Golden age to contemporary.

Probably the most interesting thing about the evening was a prevalent unifying theme: that comics are more than a business to those who are in the business. While much of the conversation between dealers had to do with market trends, recent buys, etc., the great majority of the discussions was more along the lines of the following: "Did you see Dave's run of Big Little books? Some incredible material ..." "Jim has a *More Fun* #125 that you would not believe ..." "I'm going to let the assistant run the booth so I can go fill in some holes ..."

The entire evening had that flavor, from the setups in the convention center to the Diamond Distributors' party later that night. The comics business is hard work; it appears even more difficult to be successful in it. Something else seems to keep people's hands in the profession.

That something is, I think, a young kid, around 6-11, who found what he needed in comics, many years ago. The youth was able to fill emotionally undeveloped parts of himself in a safe and sane manner. This process of identification and role modelling is crucial for this period of psychological growth. It's called latency, a developmental stage between the childhood and teen years, when identity, gender roles and same-sex friendship abilities are forming and coalescing.

For some of us, comics meant having an ideal, powerful and noble man with whom to identify. For others, it was gaining the strength to triumph over the bullies and injustices of the world. For some, it was becoming a savvy strategist who relied on his wits to survive. For others, it was being a misunderstood loner who had learned to make it on his own. For some, it was a hero with mystical powers that spoke of a spiritual universe beyond ours. For others, it was having a team of buddies on whom they could depend, and who would have adventures with them. And there are many more reasons. I think at some level, all of us who are drawn to comics are still listening to that youth's search for what he needed to survive and grow.

That's what the night before the Con was like. It was hundreds of youths from their twenties to their sixties, hurrying to set up booths so they could do what they really wanted. What was that? It was best said by Gary Carter, as I glimpsed him hurrying around a corner to another dealer's table: "Let's go look through some boxes!"

Dr. John Townsend is a Clinical Psychologist and Author of "Hiding From Love"

A GREAT BIG THANK YOU!

CBM is GRATEFUL to the following for their contributions.

Erik Andresen * Pat Calhoun * Steve Carey * Bill Cole * Dr. J. Keith Contarino
Steve Duin * Alan Dulfon * Joe Dungan * Bruce Hamilton * Dr. Pat Kochanek
Sean Linkenback * Bob Overstreet * Tony Starks
Dr. John Townsend * Ted Vanliew
and all our Advertisers
who make CBM
possible!

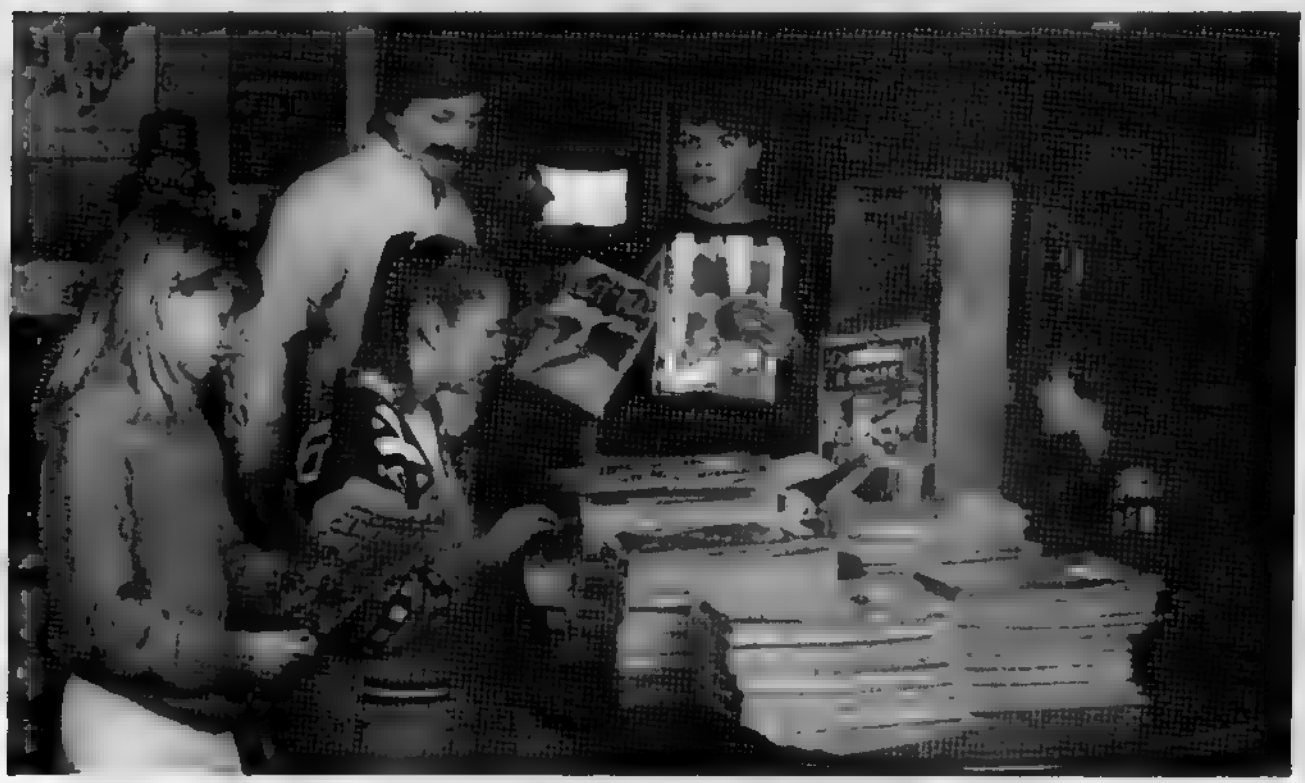
CBM SPOTLIGHT on
JAMES PAYETTE

In the world of comic book dealers and collectors it is rare to find someone so well known and so well trusted by so many avid collectors around the world.

Born in late December, 1951, in Lebanon, Vermont, Jim grew up in White River Junction, Vermont near Dartmouth. When he was twelve, Jim moved to Littleton, New Hampshire and lives in that area to this day.

Even in the rural north east, comic books made their way into Jim's life rather early on. Jim's enthusiasm for comics is obvious as he reminisces about his childhood encounters with our wonderful four color pastime.

"My father brought home a few Dells for us to read on occasion. The earliest comics I remember reading were Roy Rodgers, a Four Color Turok, Space Family Robinson, plus some early House Of Mystery and Tales Of The Unexpected. I really enjoyed some of the Jimmy Olsons. they were so bizarre...I remember one cover in particular where Jimmy Olson is being transformed into all these half-animal and half-plant creatures. I remember that as always sticking in my mind. When I was ten or eleven I became a big Marvel fan. Fantastic Four #16 really got me going. I thought at the time man. .. this is really neat.... shrinking down into a microscopic world. I also recall being totally thrilled by the story in Fantastic Four #25, with Hulk and the Thing battling it out. When I was around twelve years old I really got enthusiastic about buying new comics off the stands. We never really had a dedicated comic book distributor in our area. All we had was a magazine distributor who would distribute a few comic books pretty much when they felt like it and usually about 30 days late. They arrived on Wednesdays and Thursdays at five different places in our small town. I can remember being real excited all day waiting for school to get out so I could run down and look at all the new comic books. I recall literally scooping up issues of Spiderman, Fantasic Four, and the rest of my favorites. It required a visit to all five stores to get everything I wanted. Even then there were many issues that I ended up missing because they just weren't distributed to my area. I've always been a science fiction nut, especially the digest stuff, so reading comics was just a natural extension of that interest."



The James Payette Family: (left to right) Tiffany Gwen Payette (holding a copy of Captain America #1), James Payette (Dad holding a copy of Batman #1), Linda Marie Payette (Mom busily typing the latest catalog), Brockton Albani Payette (holding a second copy of Batman#1), and Brett James Payette (looking at the cover of Detective Comics #35). "My wife, Linda, became involved with our mail order business right from the start, and now our whole family is involved with collectible comic books."

"As an adult, I got my first Overstreet Price Guide from Publishers Clearing House of all places, the one with the "good girl art" cover." That first Guide inspired Jim to advertise locally for comics. This eventually led to the first collection that he purchased. It was a near complete Disney collection. Through advertising in the Overstreet Price Guide and various other comic book related publications, Jim bought many collections through the years, including two rather famous "Pedigree" collections; The Denver Collection and The Allentown Collection. Jim was kind enough to share some of the details about these now famous high grade collections.

"There is no original collectors name associated with the Denver collection. No one seems to know the name of the individual who originally put the collection together, but, we do know that she was a lady that lived in Denver Colorado who apparently had passed away. The people that purchased the collection bought it at an estate auction in the state of Pennsylvania, not the state of Colorado as one might think. The Less family purchased the entire collection for approximately $9000.00. They are a very nice family and I still maintain contact with them to this day. I bought the collection in 1983-84 with Joe Verenault of Sparkle City Comics. The Denver collection was exactly 151 #1 issues, including most of the key significant books like Batman #1, Marvel #1, and many other #1's. The Denver collection is famous for containing some of the highest grade copies known to fandom."

"In 1987-88 another famous collection came along. It is referred to as the Allentown collection but it didn't really originate in Allentown. It came from a town just outside of Allentown Pennsylvania. A gentleman had just placed his mother in a nursing home and was cleaning out her house when he found these books in one of the closets. His mother had put them in the closet years ago. There were 135 of some of the highest grade, most important books of the comic industry. He was going to take them to a flea market when a friend of his, who was an antique dealer, said that they were worth money. So he looked in the Overstreet Price Guide and selected six major national dealers to send letters to. He invited all of us to come and bid on the collection. In all, he got five bids, four from comic dealers and one from a local collector/dealer. I really wanted to buy that collection. I eventually emerged as the top bidder and paid $70,000 for it. In that collection was the best known copy of Detective Comics #27, one of the top two copies of Detective Comics #38, and the best known copy of Detective #29. There were also beautiful copies of Detective #'s 26, 28, 30, 31, 33, 34, 35, 44, 48, Batman 1-6, 9, and the best known copy of Captain America #1, which was even slightly better than the Mile High copy. Plus a nice copy of Marvel #1.

Jim also shared a little about his comic book mail order business and some of his personal philosophy that has earned him a world wide reputation as a strait shooter.

"I've probably got 60,000 plus comics in stock right now. I usually list between 16,000 and 18,000 items in each catalog. When I first started my mail order business I sent out xeroxed lists. I started the printed catalogs in approximately 1984. I am presently mailing catalog #40. My attitude when I buy a collection is to never take anybody to the cleaners. You know in your heart when you've been fair to someone and I could never feel comfortable taking advantage of anyone's ignorance. I feel there is a big difference between trying to make a good deal and taking advantage of someone. I find that a few dealers think they have really accomplished something great when they've stuck somebody with a restored book, or an overgraded book. An intelligent business person will treat his customers ethically, not just because it is right, but because it is also the soundest business practice. When I first started buying comics through the mail many years ago, I learned this the hard way. There seemed to be just a very few mail order dealers who I could depend on to treat me fairly. Simple things like prompt refunds and accurate grading has proven to be a pretty successful formula for keeping collectors happy. Customers, as a general rule, are quite an intelligent group. If a dealer tries to take advantage of them he won't be in business very long." CBM is proud to introduce to you, James Payette.

CBM BOOK REVIEW - ONE TO RECOMMEND

All Natural Pogo ($9.95, Thinker's Books, 70-A Greenwich Ave, Suite 433, New York, NY 10011) is a new book by Norman Hale with illustrations by (who else) Walt Kelly ! As a comic book fan, first and foremest, I was always disapointed with Pogo books because their focus was on the newspaper strip stuff...not on the comic books. Norman Hale to the rescue. Finally a book to enlighten us , inform us, and just plain entertain us with data and information from those wonderful Animal Comics. If you love comics and you love Poge (as I do), ***All Natural Pogo*** is one you won't put down till you read it twice. * * * * Four Stars. Highly recommended. GMC

The PRE — PEDIGREE PEDIGREE

During the comic book decade of the 60's (1966 to be exact) a young fellow was at the town dump in Burrelville, Rhode Island, dispatching unwanted trash. As he was about to leave, he saw a man pull up in a station wagon and start hauling boxes out of his car. This man produced several boxes and proceeded to chuck them into the pile and then just took off.

A few minutes later, this young fellow decided to check out the boxes under the slender suspicion that they might contain something interesting. He saw that they were filled with old comic books that "must be worth something", so he threw them all into his car.

He next placed an ad in Yankee magazine, offering to trade comic books for scrimshaw items. My pal, Dick Mossow, who spied the ad, was an avid collector of various types of interesting esoterica, and Dick just happened to possess several nice scrimshaw items.

After Dick responded to the ad, they met at the fellows' house, and, when Dick cracked open the boxes, he witnessed gorgeous copies of practically every Golden Age title, representing most every company from 1939-1942. Dick, being a normal, red blooded comic book fanatic, parted with the scrimshaw items with great reluctance (HA!), and acquired the entire collection.

When he got them home, he found that, for the most part, he had come into possession of nearly complete runs of most of the early and important titles, the vast majority being in the VF to NM range.

Included were: Action 1-15, Detective 1-45, All Star 1-10, Green Lantern 1-10, All American 1-20, New Comics 1-5, New Adventure and Adventure up through #65, Star Spangled 1-10, Flash 1-20, Worlds Fair 1939 & 1940, Worlds Finest 1-20, New Fun & More Fun up through #65, Whiz 4-10, Captain. Marvel 2 up, Nickel 1, Bulletman 1 up, Mystery 4-25, Captain America 2-15, Subby 1-5, All Winners 1-10, Young Allies 1, Human Torch 2, and many USA Comics. Also included were all Fox Titles, all MLJ Titles, all Fiction House titles, all Quality titles, all Chesler titles, and many more!

This occurred, of course, before the age of "pedigreed" collections. This "Buck Jones" collection clearly would rival any other, maybe even the Mile High, Bethlehem, and others. The reason I refer to this as the "Buck Jones" collection is because many of the books had the name Buck Jones neatly rubber-stamped on the top of the first page. Nothing is known about him, since the collection was acquired in a second hand fashion.

The value in today's dollars of this group of comic books that had been discarded at the dump is guestimated at around $1,500,000. Good gravy! Holy moley! Great scott! We all have to wonder how many other books or entire collections have met the fate that these books were almost destined for. In fact, because there were no Batmans, Supermans, or Wonder Womans, we conjecture that one or more boxes may been missed somehow.

Dick eventually put ads in the old Rocket's Blast Collector and gradually sold a large portion of the books, starting with the most desirable first. Even the "chaff" from the collection (that brought little interest at the time) is now considered quite substantial, and included books like pre-Batman Detectives, all the early Fox, and Centaur titles. Is it conceivable that, back then, no one collected comics like Detective #1? It's amazing to think that "tec 1" was considered just a "scrub" book at the time!

The "Buck Jones" collection has since been largely disseminated into various hands throughout the country, and Dick and I are extremely curious as to where these beautiful books ended up.

If you or anyone you know has any of these books, or have any info regarding the "Buck Jones" collection, please drop me a line in care of CBM, P.O. Box 180900, Coronado CA 92178-0900.

I thank you, Dick Mossow thanks you, and, last but not least, Buck Jones thanks you!

ESOTERIKA

by ERIK ANDRESEN

The most singularly bizarre comic book issue I have ever seen has to be ***Spunky, the Smiling Spook*** **#1** (Ajax, August 1957). I picked it up at the San Diego Con a few years back because it appeared to be an overly blatant rip off of Harvey's *Casper, the Friendly Ghost*, but I quickly discovered it was much, much more.

As it turned out, there were absolutely NO ghosts, 'smiling' or 'otherwise, throughout the entire book. And, in fact, in three of the book's four stories, there is no character named Spunky. When you finally DO find Spunky, hidden away in the deep recesses of the comic, he turns out to be a kangaroo. Apparently, Ajax editors thought kids would buy anything that looked like Casper, so they slapped a friendly ghost on the cover of an old *Frisky Fables* reprint. Imagine if Marvel did this today! Why they could put Wolverine and Sabertooth battling the Punisher on a book filled with Millie the Model reprints and... wait. I'd better not give them any ideas.

Hold on. It gets better. you see, Spunky is no ordinary kangaroo. He's a match-toting pyromaniacal kangaroo, and he spends much of the story conspiring to set fire to his enemies. After torching his old school teacher, Mr. Whiskas, Spunky proudly exclaims "I never knew I could have so much fun with one little match!" Yes, folks, this is comics code approved.

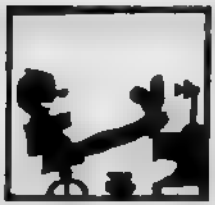
Unfortunately, Spunky the Kangaroo drops the match on the ground, and it forms little fire beasts which capture him and take him to the Fire King (who looks an awful lot like Satan). The Fire King decrees that Spunky must be roasted. The fire beasts tie him up, place him in a caldron and... well, I don't want to spoil the ending.

One could theorize that we are in fact witnessing the origin of Spunky the Smiling Spook. Sure, there's no spook named Spunky on the inside, but then again, there's no character named Antman inside of *Tales to Astonish* **#27**, and it's worth thousands of dollars. If only Spunky had lasted more than four issues, I'm sure that his origin would be worth at least half of that.

Still, it gives sober men pause. What WAS Casper before he became the friendly little ghost? Did he die a sudden and violent death, or was he stricken by the ravages of disease, and if so, which one? And why doesn't he come back from the grave and kill people, like the ghosts in Harvey's pre-code horror comics?

In subsequent issues, Spunky actually IS a smiling spook and does the sort of cute things that smiling spooks do. It was cancelled after issue #4, probably due to slow sales or a lawsuit from Harvey. Yet issue #1 leaves quite a legacy from Ajax, the company that cared so much for its readers that the title characters didn't even appear in their own books. Maybe that's why they went bankrupt. Anyway, the next time you're reading a comic and there's no scene remotely like the cover inside, at least be thankful they got the characters right.

At Right: OUTSIDE - Spunky is a smiling and friendly spook. Above: INSIDE - Spunky is a pyromaniacal, match totin' kangaroo.



Letters TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor,

Many thanks for the issues you sent. I really enjoyed reading through these - both ads and articles. Now to dazzle my friends with my newly acquired knowledge of Golden and Silver Age comics! Your contributors pass on their knowledge and wisdom in a very accessible and easily understood way. This is not to say, however, that these articles are in any way "simplified" or lacking in erudition; far from it, you have to be a real expert in any field to "teach-without-tears", and your columnists are obviously masters of their craft. This looks like an enjoyable ride - count me in!

Steve Wild, England

(Thanks Steve, CBM is extremely proud of the high caliber of collectors who so generously contribute articles. Dazzle away! Editor)

Dear Editor,

Hi, thanks for sending me The Comic Book Marketplace. I really liked it because finally after a long drought a real fanzine that is not a trade journal. A few thoughts, if I may, about what I didn't like in CBM. First, I liked all the articles but I didn't like the idea that CBM is slanted to the Golden Age Collector. The majority of the collectors who are comic book enthusiasts can not even buy all the comics coming out in the comic shops today let alone invest in Golden Age material. So by slanting CBM to the Golden Age collector you're limiting the scope of your readership and thus the profitability of CBM. Also as cited by now deceased fanzines Vintage Collectibles and Comic Fandom Advertizer as one of the reasons they failed, was that the majority of the current crop of comic book collectors thought the above two publications was a monthly gathering of old fogeys who had nothing in common with main stream fandom. Now don't get me wrong Gary, I am saying the above because I believe fandom needs a real fanzine such as yours and I believe in and want CBM to make it very badly. But I must say gearing CBM to one section of fandom like the Golden Age collector is bad news. The other nut I have to pick with you is the size of your display ads. I realize you don't have any control over this sort of thing due to the printed size of CBM itself and budget considerations. But you would make CBM more popular if you would base your display ads on these sizes: Full page 8 1/2" x 11". Why the odd size? Most collectors don't know anything about Pica but they do know what 8 1/2" x 11" is or 6" x 9" is or even 8" x 10". And yet despite the above I am subscribing to CBM because Fandom needs a fanzine such as CBM.

Hector M. Rambla, New York

(Your comments are much appreciated, Hector, and in the highly competitive world of publishing a too narrowly focused publication can run aground. CBM has a focus which is actually rather wide when you stop to think about it. We cater to the interests of collectors all the way from the early part of the century and up through the 30s, 40s, 50, 60s, 70, and early 80s. The only area of comic book collecting that we do not focus on is the last five to ten years approximately. I appreciate your subscription very much. I also appreciate your obviously genuine concern for the success of CBM. Please be assured that CBM is happy and healthy and planning to be around for a very long time. Editor)

Dear Editor,

I'll let others battle it out over the start of the Silver Age (SA). But I'd like to propose a different ending than the choices on your survey, along with a start point for the Bronze (modern) Age. To me, Spider-Man 122 is the logical climax of the Silver Age. This issue features the death of the arch enemy of the quintesential super-hero of the SA. It marks the end of a story plot line going back to Spider-Man #39 (the Green Goblin knowing Spider-Man's identity), and a major turning point in the life of Peter Parker. The problem, for example, with picking TTA #101, TOS #99, ST #181, and JIM #125 is that there are books which came later (Captain America #100, Iron Man #1, the Silver Surfer series) that we usually think of as SA. Spider-Man #122 was the last major event of the SA. As for the start of the Bronze Age, the choice is obvious - Spider-Man #129. Rambo-like characters dominate the new comics market, and

this issue is the beginning for the first - the Punisher. I would be interested in knowing what others think of my choices.

Michael Richards, Massachusetts

(Nice to hear from you Michael. Your suggestion definitely has merit. Thanks for sharing it. Editor)

Dear Editor,

I was wondering why a comic book listed White Mountain copy in NM/M is three times the cost of a comic in the same condition.

Scott Houston, Virginia

(Good question. Certain exceptionally high grade pedigreed collection copies commonly go for anywhere from three to ten times Overstreet, depending on actual grade, price guide value, general rarity, rarity in grade, and of coarse, demand. Dr. Pat Kochanek will be discussing the White Mountain collection in an up coming THE ULTIMATE PEDIGREE article. Editor)

Dear Editor,

Let me add my congratulations for creating a publication that adds professional credibility to the art and science of collecting Golden Age comic books. I especially enjoyed Always Another Rainbow in CBM #3. Would you consider doing an in depth comprehensive piece on the man who, in my opinion, is the Grand Master of Comic Book writing: Gaylord DuBois. He wrote more than 3000 comic book scripts including Tarzan, Space Family Robinson, Lone Ranger, Korak son of Tarzan, and many others. I believe he is still living and even attends some conventions. It would be a great service to all of us who grew up reading Mr. DuBois stories. He wrote with values that promoted the golden rule, kindness and a reverence for life. Mr. DuBois helped shape attitudes and behavior toward people and animals in millions of children for generations. I believe he contributed in a meaningful way to help shape America as a kinder, gentler, more neighborly kind of place during the years that he wrote. If you could possibly print an interview with him I'm sure his remarks, memories and reflections on the contrast between his philosophy of writing and contemporary values portrayed in most comic books would be most interesting. I, for one, would appreciate you asking him "How can I find a list of all the books, comic books, short stories etc. the Mr. DuBois has written?" Also, would you find out if Mr. DuBois would allow his address to be printed in your CBM? I would like to write to him. Again, thanks for doing such a professional job with CBM. Enclosed is a check for 12 more dollars for an upgrade to a 1st class subscription. Please send #1, #2, and #3 copies of CBM. My 3rd class copies arrived in pieces with pages missing. Thanks! (I would like to have "Mint" copies of CBM. I think 10 years from now they will be collectibles.)

David Brauhm, Iowa

(I have personally been very interested in the contributions of Mr. DuBois for a number of years now. CBM would be very interested in publishing an interview with this great and talented giant. If any readers out there could help with this project, please contact me. You are not the only third class subscriber who has been impatient with the rather tardy third class mail. We would like to remind all third class subscribers that they can upgrade to a first class subscription by simply forwarding an additional $12. Also, regrettably CBM #1 is now completely sold out and issues #2, 3 & 4 are also severely limited at this time. We will continue to sell the few remainders that we still have for $2 each for as long as they last. We apologize for not having foreseen the demand for back issues of CBM. If we had known, we would have sure printed a whole heck of a lot more. Editor)

Dear Editor,

I shamefacedly admit that I missed the first three issues of your fine, much needed magazine and am enclosing $ to cover the cost of the first three issues. (If they aren't all ready sold out, which is very possible). I received #4 today and as I take Wednesdays off, I had nothing to do. My wife plopped it on the coffee table and said "Here, now you've got something to do" and I did. I spent the afternoon reading and loving it. Keep it comin'.

Don Cook, New York

(If you keep reading and loving it, we'll keep printing it. Editor)

Dear CBM,

Enclosed is my check for $4 - for CBM issues #1, & 3 (I bought #2 on the newsstands, subscribed,

lated to hear of your upcoming article on him. You people are doing a tremendous job with CBM and I for one would like to thank you. Any chance for an article on Simon and Kirby? thanks again.

A. Veccio, Delaware

(See previous letter, we are still excited. Fear not, a Simon and Kirby article is in the works. Editor)

Dear Editor,

I agree with Mr. Contarino that it would be hard to accept the truly silly stories DC put out after the Batman TV show as Silver Age (anyone disagreeing with that should go find a Superboy 136 and read the soul-stirring chant of the SCPA). However, a lot of quality stories were still being produced over at Marvel. So why not have Two Endings? If the Silver Age was really a time of classic stories, experimentation, and revitalization, let the period when each company lost the spark mark its passing. For DC, when those awful Go-Go Checks were first used. For Marvel, Choice G: The last issues of Tales To Astonish, Tales Of Suspense, Strange Tales, and Journey Into Mystery. Of course, I'm neglecting the other companies, but I can't do everything.

Bill Shealy, Hawaii

(Check out the "When Was The Silver Age Anyway?" survey results in this issue. Editor)

Hi Keith Contarino,

I saw your article about the Silver Age in CBM, and I'm intrigued by the various theories. For the beginning of the Silver Age, I think the advent of the comics code, Detective #225, and Showcase #4 are all thoroughly plausible. I lean towards Showcase #4, because it was by far the most directly exciting, was a great concept, and is the type of book that care really provide the necessary impetus for ushering in a new age. Detective #225 is more of a "by the way, there's a nice little back up story here, if you care" type of book. There had been other back up stories in books previously featuring good characters and artists, an example being Tommy Tomorrow by Finlay. The comics code was a major event, which seems to have set the stage for the silver age. As for the end, I feel it has more to do with the end of the decade, and the departure of Kirby form Marvel, which were very close. Marvel had, as you mentioned, pretty much co-opted DC's former position during the 60's in terms of quality and popularity, and to my mind became the controlling company in any discussion of the finale of the Silver Age. There seemed to be several important, and powerful cross currents during the sixties in pop culture, the most notable parallel to comics being the Beatles (who broke up in '69) although their last album was released in early '70). Kirby was the major driving wheel of the industry, and the ending of his unparalleled consecutive issue production on FF and thor, notably, was a big event. In fact, I recall that Steranko, in the intro to his History of Comics said without Kirby, there'd be no history to write about. I agree with him. I definitely consider Subby #1, Iron Man #1, Cap #100 et al to be Silver Age books. In my mind, there's an early Silver Age and later Silver Age, the early ending sometime in 1964. At that time, Marvel's books seemed to become generally better and more polished. I disagree with those who think that Marvel's only important output was the 1st few years. '65-67 were filled with great work and intriguing new characters (By gods, even Don Heck did some decent work). I'd say up thru 1961, DC was more important, and had reintroduced most of it's major players. After that, Marvel was firmly in control on the interest, originality, and quality meters. Well, there you have it, my humble (If you don't agree, I'll kill ya!) opinion on the whole morass.

Ted VanLiew, Massachusetts

(See Ted's further discussion of this topic in this issue. Editor)

Dear Keith Contarino,

The Silver Age began Nov 1955 with Detective #225. The Silver Age ended at the end of 1968. It was a great article - keep up the stimulating columns.

Conrad Eschenberg, New York

(Conrad's vote was typical of the many we received. Look for J. Keith Contarino's article in this issue. It's an interesting change of pace. Editor)

Dear Editor,

Here are my picks for most undervalued DC: 1) Showcase #55 (in addition to all the important appearances, it is the first silver-age book to exclusively feature golden-age characters and its got an awesome dark cover). 2) Our Army at War #151 (certainly one of the rarest from this era as well as highly

undervalued). 3) Brave & The Bold #61 4) Showcase #57, 58, (57 predates O.A.W. #155, therefore its the third app of En. Ace and both 57 & 58 are the first book length stories involving that incredible character done by Kubert the master). 5) Flash #151 6) Showcase #56 7) Brave & The Bold #62 8) Flash #137 (still highly undervalued, at least a double guide in high grade). 9) Flash #175 (2nd Supe & Flash race noted but not worth more than #174 or 176). 10) Green Lantern #13 & 20 (The first Flash/GL team-ups. . . 13 is Flash 131 isn't even mentioned in Overstreet. It predates Green Lantern impossible to find in any grade). 11) Brave & The Bold #34, 35, 36, 42-44 (Of course, in my mind the 44 should be worth more just for the fantabulous cover alone). 12) Showcase #45 (origin of one of the most enduring characters in the Silver Age and beyond, and certainly the most enduring war character). 13) JLA #21 (still highly undervalued for obvious reasons). 14) JLA #46 (Sandman and Solomon Grundy . . .late in the general scheme of things but hard to find nonetheless). 15) Our Army at War #128 (Same as Showcase #45-arguably harder to find). 16) Flash #129 (Predates GL #40 - which is the 8th or 9th app. of the GA GL in the Silver Age. By three years and it is the 2nd Silver Age app. of GA Flash. Come on collectors, where the hell are your priorities? 17) Showcase #60 18) Atom #29 (Fairly late as far as the Golden Age in Silver Age appearances go but still highly sought after and undervalued). 19) JLA #22, 29, & 30 20) All key and semi/key war books (For that matter, all war books in the five major DC titles are undervalued; especially since the late 10 cent covers till about 1966 had some of the finest art with <simulated> painted covers by some of the masters including R. Heath and J. Kubert). A note on the last one: although some collectors have an appreciation for some of the art from that period, most collectors who collect the Silver Age from about '62 to '68 that I have talked with collect primarily for the characters...not for the art--as fantastic as it was. I think that there is a great deal of ignorance as to how truly innovative some of the artists really were from this time period. I like to think of it in terms of acting. First there was the loner/hero played by actors like Bogart. After him was Montgomery Clift, a loner type verging on the rebellious. Then there were Brando and Dean and to a lesser degree, Newman and Hopper. Finally, with "Easy Rider" we are presented with the "modern" anti-hero in Jack Nicholson and later with De Niro, Paccino, and Voight. There is a progression there. I see Neal Adams drawing much from Joe Kubert and Wrightson drawing much from Hogarth and others. People fail to realize that all of the finest art being done nowadays was influenced by masters from another era. Maybe my analogy is a bit far flung and not as tight as it could be, but I see the progression in comics much like I see one in the movies. Let me know what you think. That's my DC top 20. Others would be the Superman #199, all Eighty Page Giants, Star Spangled War #138-144, Green Lantern #16, Flash #128, Flash #139, Lois Lane #70, Atom #36, Green Lantern #76, Mystery in Space #87-90. A host of others but then, I wouldn't have a top 20 would I.

Mick Rabin, California

(Wow....great info! I agree with everything you've listed. A new comer to collecting could simply copy your letter as their want list. I also thought the analogy to film was very accurate. Editor)

Dear Editor,

CBM is a good read. Being an avid Comic Magazine/Ultmem/Chesler/Centaur Line collector (9 more to go for everything from comic mag #1 to CMO #2) I enjoyed Steve's article. Couple of comments on Sean's sleeper column. While sort of acknowledging Comic Mag #1 & Western Picture Stories/Star Ranger as not being Centaurs, if you are going to get into this pre-Centaur company(s) you have to focus on "key" books such as Funny Pages #6 (two page teaser for the clock - the first masked hero. Interestingly, the house ad has "Oct-Nov" on cover for this book; the book does not! This book also gets my vote for the worst comic cover art); Funny Picture Stories #1 (first clock story, first "action" cover. As has been said, this book easily - or should have - been called "Adventure Picture Stories"; Hell, this book has as much of a theme as Detective Picture Stories #1 (heavy pulp influence; great Eisner art, check the cover to #5). What is fascinating is how these books truly are derivative (rip-offs) from the DCs at the time. Mahon/Cook were at DC before this which explains how many of the features are the same as DC (and vice a versa). Note Everett Arnold was a partner with Cook and Mahon for a while. He went on to form Quality. Note also some early overlapping. features and format there as well. The demise of Centaur may be traceable to the fact that a comic shop such as Funnies Inc. produced

much of the cover material. Maybe they got too busy with Timely and their own books (Target, etc)? Mahon at one point was a business partner Lloyd Jacquet. Mike Sanchez has done a lot of work comparing the DC and Comic Magazine features. It would be perfect material for CBM. He has done a great and fascinating job on this. Also most fans know of Centaur reprints in Arrow etc. However, some of the early Centaur material in Keen Detective Funnies are reprints of early Comic Magazine Company material (e.g. Keen Detective Funnies V1#8 reprints much of Funny Picture Stories #1; Eisners story in Keen Detective Funnies V2#6 is from Detective Fiction Stories #4). Heck, if you think Centaurs are undervalued/under appreciated, take that times two for Comic Magazine/Chesler books. I leave you with my PET theory. If Funny Pages continued on from Comic Magazine 1-5, Funny Picture Stories continued as a Centaur title and if we can conclude that Keen Detective Funnies #8 continued on from Detective Picture Stories 6, 7 (do they exist?) then why can't we conclude that from Western Picture Stories 1,2,3,4 comes (ta dah) Amazing Man #5! Ah such esoteria only could be grist for CBM!

Jon Berk, Connecticut

(We have been in contact with Michael Sanchez and he has agreed to write THE definitive article on this very topic. By brother, Lane, and I (way back in our 1983 Price Guide article on pre hero DC) just barely scratched the surface on all the cross-over between these pioneering companies. I thought your data was very interesting and informative and I'm really looking forward to Michael's info as well. Editor)

Dear Editor,

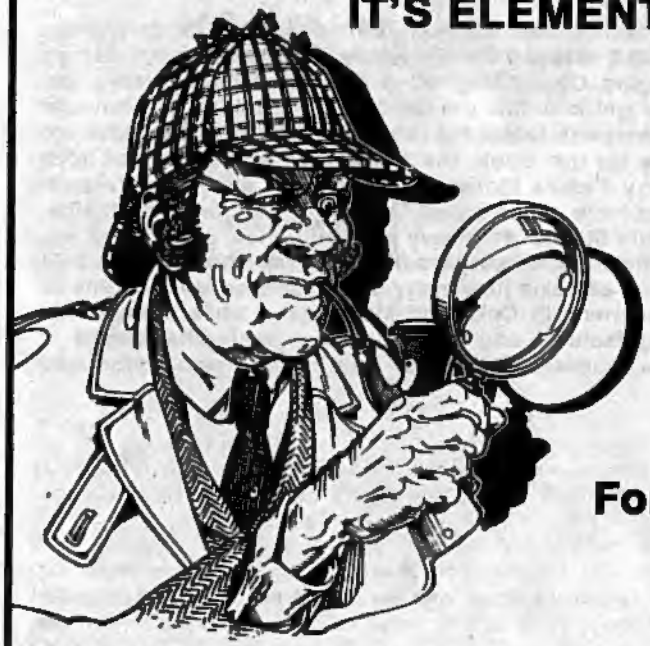
I really enjoy your CBM publication, it is without a doubt the finest publication when it comes to Silver and Golden Age books. I also want to mention that the Ultimate Pedigree articles by Pat Kochanek are incredible and I hope he goes on to write about the San Francisco and other pedigree collections as well. I hope you continue to publish the CBM for many years to come, it is a much needed publication for the Comic Book hobby!

Erik Rader, California

(Thank you for your kind words, I also feel that Dr. Kochanek's articles are incredible. He has indicated that his column will continue and will address the other pedigreed collections you mentioned. We plan to publish CBM for many years to come. Editor)

That's it for this issue, please send your questions, comments, and suggestions to:
The COMIC BOOK MARKETPLACE, P.O. Box 180900, Coronado, CA 92178-0900

IT'S ELEMENTARY MY DEAR WATSON . . .



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